

# Taliban's open letter to Donald Trump urges US to leave Afghanistan

The 1,600-word note said a US withdrawal would “truly deliver American troops from harm’s way.”

The Taliban have released an open letter to President Donald Trump, reiterating their calls for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan after 16 years of war.

In a long and rambling note in English that was sent to journalists by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, the insurgents said Mr Trump has recognised the errors of his predecessors by seeking a review of the US strategy for Afghanistan.

However, Mujahid said Mr Trump should not hand control of the US Afghan policy to the military but rather announce the withdrawal of US forces – and not an increase in troops as the administration has planned.

The 1,600-word note said a US withdrawal would “truly deliver American troops from harm’s way” and bring about “an end to an inherited war”.

The United States now has about 8,400 troops in Afghanistan.

Mr Trump has so far resisted the Pentagon’s recommendations to send almost 4,000 more troops to expand training of Afghan military forces and bolster US counter-terrorism operations.

The deployment has been held up amid broader strategy questions, including how to engage regional powers in an effort to stabilise Afghanistan.

What is evident is that the Afghan government has struggled to halt Taliban advances on its own and is now also battling an Islamic State affiliate that has carved out a foothold mostly in eastern Afghanistan.

In its most recent report, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction said the Taliban hold sway in nearly 50% of the country.

The Taliban letter sought to flatter Mr Trump for initiating the Afghan policy

review while warning against handing it to “warmongering generals”.

“We have noticed that you have understood the errors of your predecessors and have resolved to thoroughly rethinking your new strategy in Afghanistan,” it said, addressing Mr Trump.

“You must also not hand over the Afghan issue to warmongering generals, but must make a decision where history shall remember you as an advocate of peace.”

The letter also offered a long list of complaints against Afghanistan’s US-orchestrated unity government and referenced a newly formed coalition of disgruntled warlords formed at a meeting last month in Turkey as an opposition bloc to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

Mr Ghani has been under pressure from critics who have described him as divisive and accused him of stoking ethnic rivalries.

The opposition bloc includes Uzbek warlord and Afghanistan’s first vice president, Rashid Dostum, who has been criticised by the US for human rights abuses and is currently living in Turkey.

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Source: <http://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/uk-world-news/taliban-warn-trump-afghanistan-13483208?service=responsive>

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