



Alexandria, Virginia, 22314

Fellow Americans,

You have probably heard the news about the President's plan to increase American military involvement in Afghanistan.

The Libertarian perspective is very different.

After toppling the Afghan government almost sixteen years ago, the United States entered into nation building thinking that it would help improve corners of the world that terrorists find inviting. Our country has spent hundreds of billions of dollars and lost thousands of lives in these futile efforts.

According to [Forbes](#) : "Since [the initial] intervention in the aftermath of 9/11, roughly 2,400 American military personnel have died and more than 20,000 been wounded attempting to bring democracy to Central Asia. Some 3,500 military contractors have been killed, along with more than 1,100 allied personnel. Overall the US has poured more than \$800 billion into the war. Set aside the costs of combat. The US has spent \$117.3 billion on relief and 'reconstruction,' that is, attempting to create a functioning state in Afghanistan."

Despite all of this sacrifice and hard work, nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan has been a

failure. No matter how sophisticated our military is and no matter how much we sacrifice, nation building is far more difficult than our politicians believed. Not only that, it may create more terrorists than it quells.

Foreign military intervention is insanely complicated. In any foreign conflict there are countless people, organizations, and countries involved, each with their own motives, goals, and methods. It is very hard to accurately predict what will happen because there are so many actors involved. Things often don't work out as predicted, so we must be wary of unintended consequences before taking any action, especially war.

We are now living with the unintended consequences of previous military action in Afghanistan, both by the US government and others.

The President's announcement of increased military action in Afghanistan flies in the face of his past positions on American involvement in Afghanistan, [such as](#) "We have wasted an enormous amount of blood and treasure in Afghanistan. Their government has zero appreciation. Let's get out."

This President is consistent: consistently breaking campaign promises and saber rattling with American lives.

In recent weeks, he's threatened North Korea with "fire and fury" comments. North Korea is another complex problem without any "good" answers. Backing someone into a corner is not a good way to get a peaceful resolution; this is especially true when that someone is a tyrannical dictator. It is a very tricky scenario, but the ideal approach is to work towards de-escalation rather than poking him and encouraging him to lash out violently.

The President has also publicly commented about a "possible military option" to deal with the regime in Venezuela. We are all heartbroken by the tragic state of Venezuela right now but we know from Iraq and Afghanistan that simply overthrowing a dictator is not enough to greatly improve the well-being of a population. After years of nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan the people who live there are still in a horrible situation. Overthrowing the regime in Venezuela would not make the lives of ordinary Venezuelans any better and might even make things worse.

The US military is very powerful. Overthrowing dictators is not hard for our troops to accomplish. But dealing with the aftermath is, because that aftermath is so insanely complicated and unpredictable. That is one of the chief reasons we should be so careful with military action.

Libertarians believe in self-defense. If America is attacked, then we have the right to defend ourselves. But too often American presidents have pursued military action that meddles in other countries that have not attacked the United States. Other times, American presidents use the saber rattling of various despots as an excuse to use military action. Libertarians believe that using our brave men and women as pawns is inappropriate and immoral, so we oppose military action that is not truly defensive in nature.

The Libertarian Party also advocates a restructuring our country's interactions with the world. We want to prioritize diplomacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts. We also seek to move past old grievances. In his *Farewell Address*, President George Washington warned against permanent allies and permanent enemies. He also warned against "permanent alliances". The Libertarian Party advocates these same principles. Towards that end, this past weekend, the Libertarian National Committee passed a resolution calling for the US to withdraw from NATO.

In the same spirit as [President Washington](#) , we seek to "Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all."

I hope you'll find these thoughts helpful as you talk with your friends and neighbors about current events. If we want to make progress in the polls, we need to be discussing these critical topics and the Libertarian perspective on them with our networks throughout the election cycle.

Towards liberty,

Nicholas Sarwark
Chair, Libertarian National Committee