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Guest Opinion



## Democrats, Trump are right; time to end the forever wars

By Joe Goode, President of the Boise State Young Democrats

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On Sept. 14, 2001, Congress wrote what would prove to be one of the largest blank checks in our nation's history. The Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) against terrorists gave President Bush authority to attack the Taliban, the Sunni fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan, and the mastermind Osama bin Laden.

The House of Representatives and the Senate voted, and there was only one vote in opposition: a Democratic representative from California who warned of another Vietnam.

To be clear, this is not how the Constitution of the United States provides for committing our troops and treasures to war.

Seventeen years and six months later, that very same Authorization of Use of Military Force has been used to allow military action in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Georgia, Yemen, Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, Syria, Eritrea, Iraq and Somalia.

Other AUMFs have been used to fight ISIS and other terrorist groups around the world. Our military is engaged in counterterrorism missions in 80 nations on

six continents.

Once again, this is not how the Constitution provides for U.S. involvement in war.

The war on terror is now being called the "forever war." It has claimed an estimated half million lives around the globe and cost is over \$6 trillion.

More than 2.7 million Americans have fought in the war and 7,000 service members and 8,000 private contractors have been killed. More than 53,000 service members returned home bearing physical wounds and countless more carry psychological injuries. More than one million Americans who

served in the War on Terror receive some level of disability compensation from the V.A.

When Donald Trump ran for the White House, one of his central promises was to rein in overseas military adventurism. While Trump's foreign policy has been mostly unwise if not self-defeating in many areas, he is right, as was President Obama, to want to scale back a global conflict that appears to have no end.

There are now 22,000 troops from almost 40 countries in Afghanistan. Almost 14,000 of them

are American. The mission now seems to include training a local force, buttressing a weak central government, nation-building, and maintaining hard-gained ground. Combat has taken a back seat to nation-building.

Trump's administration announced it would withdraw 7,000 troops, but has yet to do so.

Idaho Senator Jim Risch and the majority of the Republicans in the Senate have voted to keep troops involved in forever wars in the Middle East.

The Democrats in the Senate are unified in ending the wars and bringing our troops home.

It is time for Idahoans to urge Risch as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to reach across the aisle and end the forever wars.

We must face the cruel truth that, at best, the war is deadlocked.

The objective of building an Afghan government that can stand on its own, protect the population and fight off terrorist insurgents may not be achievable, and we should no longer invest American lives and treasure in an unachievable effort.

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