
REPORT: TRUMP FUMED ABOUT AFGHANISTAN IN TENSE MEETING

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President Donald Trump has become increasingly frustrated by the situation in Afghanistan and has recently floated a change in command as he struggles to settle on a new strategy after years of war.

NBC News first reported Wednesday that Trump fumed during a meeting last month over the lack of progress. The network said he also proposed firing Army Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, during the heated Situation Room exchange.

The U.S. has been fighting in Afghanistan for nearly 16 years, but Trump has yet to settle on a new strategy for achieving the goal he inherited from the Obama administration: getting the Afghan government to a point where it can defend itself.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said last month that the administration was close to announcing its new strategy – despite blowing a self-imposed deadline – but was still sorting out the big ideas, beyond troop levels and other military details.

It just takes time, he said. It wasn't that past presidents were dumb or anything else. This is hard work, so you've got to get it right. That's all there is to it.

Mattis said as recently as June that we are not winning the war. Trump's predecessors also struggled with the task of stabilizing the country and bringing U.S. troops home.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders referred questions about the meeting to the National Security Council, which said the president's team continues to develop options for him that address threats and opportunities to America arising from this vital region.

The president's national security team is developing a comprehensive, integrated strategy for South Asia that utilizes all aspects of our national power to address this complex region, said NSC spokesman Michael Anton in a statement. That strategy has been worked carefully in the interagency process and while no decision has been made the president's team continues to develop options for him that address threats and opportunities to America arising from this vital region.

He declined to comment on details of the classified meeting.

The meeting took place the day after Trump took the unusual step of having lunch with a group of service members who'd spent time on the ground in Afghanistan to try to brainstorm new ideas for

fighting the war.

Im going to be talking to you about Afghanistan, what you think, your views, Trump said as he sat down for lunch, telling reporters, These are people on the ground I know it probably better than anybody.

Weve been there for now close to 17 years, he went on to say, and I want to find out why weve been there for 17 years, how its going, and what we should do in terms of additional ideas. Ive heard plenty of ideas from a lot of people, but I want to hear it from the people on the ground.

According to NBC, Trump brought up the lunchtime conversation at the meeting with senior aides and advisers, comparing the soldiers on-the-ground perspective to waiters who know the ins-and-outs of the restaurants where they work. He at one point brought up what he said was an ill-advised closure of Manhattans 21 Club restaurant, which he blamed on an expensive consultant.

Trump has long expressed skepticism about experts conclusions, including the U.S. intelligence community and military commanders. I know more about ISIS than the generals do. Believe me, he said at one point during his campaign.

Kaynak/Source: