Afghanistan War: October 7, 2001, to August 30, 2021
US Military/Department of Defense Casualties and Financial Costs

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- 2,456 U.S. military deaths occurred during the Afghanistan War, which ran October 7, 2001 to August 30, 2021.
- 3,923 Department of Defense (DOD) contractor / civilian deaths occurred during the war.
- 20,700 U.S. military were wounded during the war.
- The war cost an estimated $2.261 trillion, excluding post-2021 veteran care and interest on the money borrowed.
- The most deaths in a single year, 498, occurred in 2010 during Barack Obama’s presidency.
- The most expensive year of the war, FY 2012, cost an estimated $97.5 billion.
- An estimated 66,000-69,000 Afghan military and police, 1,144 allied troops, 47,245 Afghan civilians, 444 humanitarian aid workers, and 72 journalists also died.

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I. Executive Summary

The Afghanistan War started with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) on October 7, 2001, and ended with Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS) when the last troops pulled out on August 30, 2021. A total of 832,000 U.S. troops and 25,100 Defense Department civilians served in Afghanistan during this time, alongside thousands of U.S. contractors.

Those war operations led to the deaths of 2,456 U.S. military members and the deaths of 3,923 U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) contractors and civilians. 20,770 U.S. military members were wounded.

The Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute at Boston University estimated the total U.S. costs from 2001 to 2021 at $2.261 trillion, consisting of an estimated $330 billion in interest payments on borrowed money, $933 billion for Defense Department Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) war budget, $55 billion for State Department OCO war budget, $443 billion for Defense Department base budget war-related increases, and $296 billion for veterans’ care.

The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), an oversight authority created by Congress, estimated the United States spent $899.8 billion on the Afghanistan War from 2001 to 2021. That estimate does not include cost categories for increases over the DOD base budget, veteran care, and interest on money borrowed to pay for the war, all of which account for $1.259 trillion of the Cost of War Project’s estimate. Adding that $1.259 trillion to the SIGAR estimate of $899.8 billion would lead to a total of $2.159 trillion, which is in line with the Cost of War Project’s $2.261 trillion estimate.

The numbers in this report are as we found them and are presented without subjective analysis or theories.

Summary of US Military/DOD Deaths and US Military Wounded in the Afghanistan War from 2001 to 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. President / Years</th>
<th>B. US Military Deaths</th>
<th>C. DOD Contractor &amp; Civilian Deaths</th>
<th>D. Total Deaths (B &amp; C)</th>
<th>E. US Military Wounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>626</td>
<td>(We have only found cumulative numbers)</td>
<td>(We have only found cumulative numbers)</td>
<td>2,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of US Costs Related to the Afghanistan War from 2001 to 2021

- $933 billion: Defense Department Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) (War) Budget
- $59 billion: State Department OCO (War) Budget
- $443 billion: Defense Department Base Budget War-Related Increases
- $296 billion: Veterans Care for Afghan War Vets
- $530 billion: Estimated Interest on War Borrowing
- Total: $2.281 trillion

II. US Military Deaths in Afghanistan by Year & by President

The table and chart below show 2,456 U.S. military deaths over the 20 years of the Afghanistan War.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of US Military Deaths</th>
<th>George W. Bush</th>
<th>Barack Obama</th>
<th>Donald Trump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>17,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>132</td>
<td>65 US Military Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>156</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>311</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of US Military Deaths</th>
<th>Joe Biden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals:
- 2,456 U.S. Military Deaths
- 3,923 DOD Contractor & Civilian Deaths
- 6,379 Total Deaths
- 20,770 U.S. Military Wounded

Note: Joe Biden's death count includes data up to 2021.
III. US Department of Defense Contractor and Civilian Deaths

The Afghanistan War operations led to the deaths of 3,917 Department of Defense contractors and six DOD civilian employees from 2001 to 2021, a total of 3,923 deaths.[16][19] We have not found a breakdown of these numbers by year.

The U.S. contractor death total is probably not exact. According to the U.S. Department of Labor website page “Defense Base Act Case Summary by Nation,” which keeps count of these numbers, “These reports do not constitute the complete or official casualty statistics of civilian contractor injuries and deaths. They are offered as general information to the public who may be interested in the scope of civilian government contracting overseas.”[20]

The Costs of War Project stated that “the majority of U.S. contractors are the citizens of other countries, many of whose deaths appear not to have been reported.”[21]

IV. US Military Wounded in Afghanistan by Year & by President

The numbers below come from the Defense Department, Defense Casualty Analysis System.[22] Note that the number of U.S. military members wounded in Afghanistan may be higher than reported. The ACLU stated that, “the Defense Department has gone to significant lengths to control and suppress information about the human cost of war” in Afghanistan.[23]
V. Costs of the War in Afghanistan Through 2021, Excluding Post-2021 Veteran Care & Interest on Borrowing

The Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute at Boston University estimated total congressional appropriations and spending for the Afghanistan War at $2.261 trillion. The estimate consists of:

- Defense Department Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) (War) Budget ($933B);
- State Department OCO (War) Budget ($59B);
- Defense Department Base Budget War-Related Increases ($443B);
- Veterans Care for Afghan War Vets ($206B); and
- Estimated Interest on War Borrowing ($530B).

The Costs of War Project does not show an annual breakdown for its estimate, and does not include projected future costs of veteran care or future interest costs on the money borrowed to pay for the war.

SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), an oversight authority created by Congress, reported a cost of $899.8 billion from 2001 to 2021, which includes Department of Defense spending of $849.7 billion and additional "Reconstruction" spending of $50.1 billion for USAID, the Department of State and other unnamed agencies for Security, Governance/Development, Humanitarian, and Agency Operations.

SIGAR noted that its estimate was lower because the Costs of War Project "adds what it considers to be Afghanistan-related costs of $433 billion above DOD baseline costs, $296 billion in medical and disability costs for veterans, and $530 billion in interest costs on related Treasury borrowing."

Those three additional costs included by the Costs of War Project but not by SIGAR total $1.259 trillion. Adding that to the SIGAR estimate of $899.8 billion results in a total of $2.159 trillion, which is in line with the Cost of War Project’s $2.261 trillion estimate.

The charts below contain SIGAR’s estimates of the Department of Defense’s cost of war totals by president, including DOD spending on reconstruction for fiscal years 2002 to 2001. Due to SIGAR’s style of reporting, these totals do not include additional costs of reconstruction for USAID, the Department of State and other agencies that totaled $50.1 billion over fiscal years 2002-2021.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Fiscal Year</th>
<th>DOD Cost of War Totals ($ billions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 2002</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 2003</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 2004</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 2005</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 2006</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 2013</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 2014</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 2015</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 2016</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 2017</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barack Obama: $533.4B
Donald Trump (2018-2021): $148.2 billion

Department of Defense Cost of War and Reconstruction in Afghanistan, by President, FY 2002 - FY 2021

Estimated Congressional Appropriations and Spending for the Afghanistan War, 2001-2021

- State Department OCO (War) Budget - $933 billion (41.3%)
- Veterans Care for Afghan War Vets - $296 billion (13.1%)
- Department of Defense Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) (War) Budget - $59 billion (2.6%)
- Estimated Interest on War Borrowing - $530 billion (23.4%)
- Defense Department Base Budget War-Related Increases - $443 billion (19.6%)

Total: $2.261 trillion
VI. Conclusion

While the numbers in this report are the most authoritative we have found, it should be noted that exact numbers are difficult, if not impossible, to obtain during war. Regardless, we hope the above information gives you a snapshot of U.S. military and related casualties, and dollars spent in America’s war in Afghanistan, from 2001 to 2021.

In addition to estimates presented above, the Costs of War project estimated that 66,000-69,000 Afghan military and police, 1,144 allied troops from other nations, 47,245 Afghan civilians, 51,191 opposition fighters, 72 journalists, and 444 humanitarian aid workers were killed due to the war in Afghanistan,\[31\]

References


7. Based on the definition of “defense contractor,” the U.S. Contractor death total many contain both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals.


11. Much can exist beneath the surface of the numbers, and good people can and probably will debate what the numbers and data indicate. The situation of a new administration inhering a previous administration’s plan already in motion is an example of one factor that might confuse and contextualize the costs and deaths attributed to a specific president.


22 Source – Chart & Table: Defense Casualty Analysis System – Casualty Summaries by Month for "U.S. Military Casualties - Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Casualty Summary by Month and Service" and "U.S. Military Casualties - Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) Casualty Summary by Month and Service" dcas.dmdc.osd.mil, as of October 19, 2022, https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/app/conflictCasualties. According to the FAQ page of this site, accessed on October 22, 2021, "The central objective of DCAS is to collect and maintain U.S. casualty information on warfighters who have fallen in global or regional conflicts involving the United States. This site is maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC).…[Furthermore], a Casualty in DCAS is defined as a Service member that is/has been classified as deceased, wounded, ill or injured. … The data is provided to us directly from the Services."


25 The Costs of War Project does estimate future costs of veteran care for all post-9/11 wars, noting in a 2021 report that, "the projected future cost of VA disability compensation (not including medical costs or VA administration) to post 9/11 veterans is between $1.2 and $1.5 trillion through 2050. … Based on current utilization rates, patient and dependent enrollment, and projected numbers of veterans in the Vet Pop tables, and a conservative estimate of average medical spending per post-9/11 veteran, the projected cost of providing medical care to this cohort is in the range of $850 to $903 billion through 2050." Source: Linda J. Bilmes, "The Long-Term Costs of United States Care for Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars," watson.brown.edu, August 18, 2021, watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Bilmes_Long-Term%20Costs%20of%20Care%20for%20Vets_Aug%202021.pdf


28 The fiscal year (FY) for the federal government begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. It is designated by the calendar year in which it ends. The FY 2002 numbers would therefore include the 2001 operations in Afghanistan as the war began in October 2001. Presidents are sworn into office on January 20 of the year following a presidential election. During the 8.3 months between inauguration on January 20 and a new president's first budget going into effect on October 1, a president is generally operating under the budget approved by his or her predecessor.


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