

INDEX

- 1. Executive Summary
- 2. US Military Deaths in Afghanistan by Year & by President
- 3. US Department of Defense Contractor and Civilian Deaths
- 4. US Military Wounded in Afghanistan by Year & by President
- 5. Costs of the War in Afghanistan Through 2021, Excluding Post-2021 Veteran Care & Interest on Borrowing
- 6. Conclusion
- 7. References

Borrowing

Afghanistan War: U.S. Deaths and Costs

Updated October 19, 2022 | Published November 21, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS **||** ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

3,923 Department of Defense (DOD) contractor / civilian deaths occurred during the war.



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.^{[1][2]} 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.^{[3] [4]}




Those war operations led to the deaths of 2,456 U.S. military members,^[5] and the deaths of 3,923 U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) contractors and civilians.^{[6] [7]} 20,770 U.S. military members were wounded.^[8]

The Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute at Brown University estimated the total U.S. costs from 2001 to 2021 at \$2.261 trillion, consisting of an estimated \$530 billion in interest payments on borrowed money, \$933 billion for Defense Department Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) war budget, \$59 billion for State Department OCO war budget, \$443 billion for Defense Department base budget war-related increases, and \$296 billion for veterans' care.^[9]

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.^[10] 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.^[11]

US Military/DOD Deaths and US Military Wounded in the Afghanistan War 2001-2021

A. President	B. US Military Deaths ¹	C. DOD Contractor & Civilian Deaths ²	D. Total Deaths (B & C)	E. US Military Wounded ³
 George W. Bush (2001-2008)	626	<i>(We have only found cumulative numbers, rather than numbers broken down by year or presidency)</i>	<i>(We have only found cumulative numbers, rather than numbers broken down by year or presidency)</i>	2,656
 Barack Obama (2009-2016)	1,752			17,629
 Donald Trump	65			439



(2017-2020)



Joe Biden
(2021-)
Data is current
through September
2021

13

46

Totals	2,456 U.S. Military Deaths	3,923 DOD Contractor & Civilian Deaths	6,379 Total Deaths	20,770 U.S. Military Wounded
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¹ 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 September 7, 2021, <https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/app/conflictCasualties>

² Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz, “Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars,” watson.brown.edu, September 1, 2021, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Direct%20War%20Deaths_9.1.21.pdf

³ 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 September 7, 2021, <https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/app/conflictCasualties>

Table: A-Mark Foundation • Source: [Defense Casualty Analysis System](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

US Spending Related to Afghanistan War 2001-2021 (not including post-2021 Veterans’ Care and Interest)¹

\$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: \$2.261 trillion

¹ Costs of War Project, “U.S. Costs to Date for the War in Afghanistan, 2001-2021,” watson.brown.edu, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/figures/2021/Human%20and%20Budgetary%20Costs%20of%20Afghan%20War%2C%202001-2021.pdf>

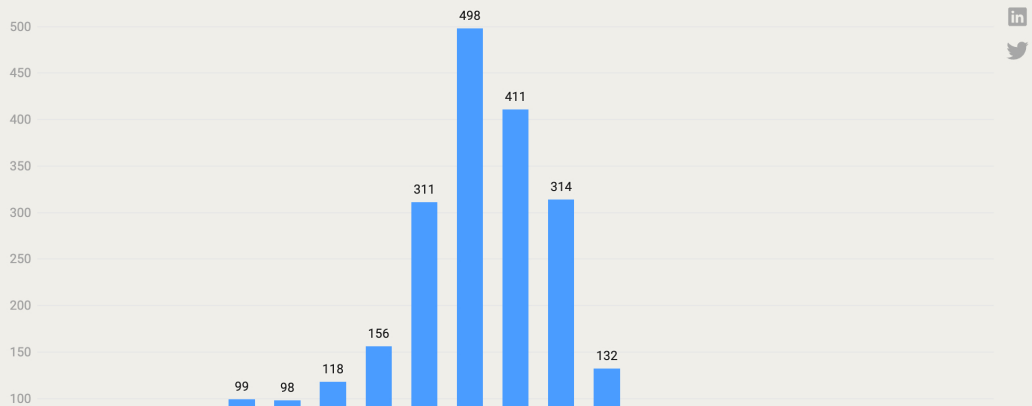
Table: A-Mark Foundation • Source: [Costs of War Project](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

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.^{[12] [13]}

	A. Year	B. Number of US Military Deaths		A. Year	B. Number of US Military Deaths	
George W. Bush 626 US Military Deaths	1. 2001	11		12. 2012	314	Barack Obama 1,752 US Military Deaths
	2. 2002	49		13. 2013	132	
	3. 2003	43		14. 2014	55	
	4. 2004	52		15. 2015	21	
	5. 2005	99		16. 2016	10	
	6. 2006	98		17. 2017	15	
	7. 2007	118		18. 2018	16	
	8. 2008	156		19. 2019	23	
Donald Trump 65 US Military Deaths	9. 2009	311		20. 2020	11	Joe Biden 13 US Military Deaths (as of 9/15/2021)
	10. 2010	498		21. 2021	13	
	11. 2011	411		Total	2,456	

US Military Deaths in Afghanistan, 2001 to 2021



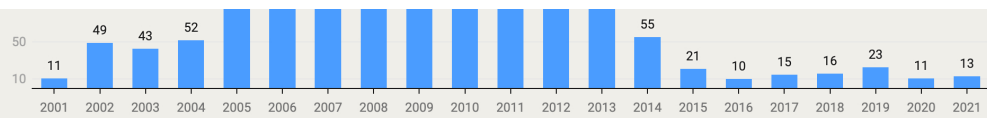


Chart: A-Mark Foundation • Source: Defense Casualty Analysis System • Get the data • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

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.^{[14] [15]} 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.”^[16]

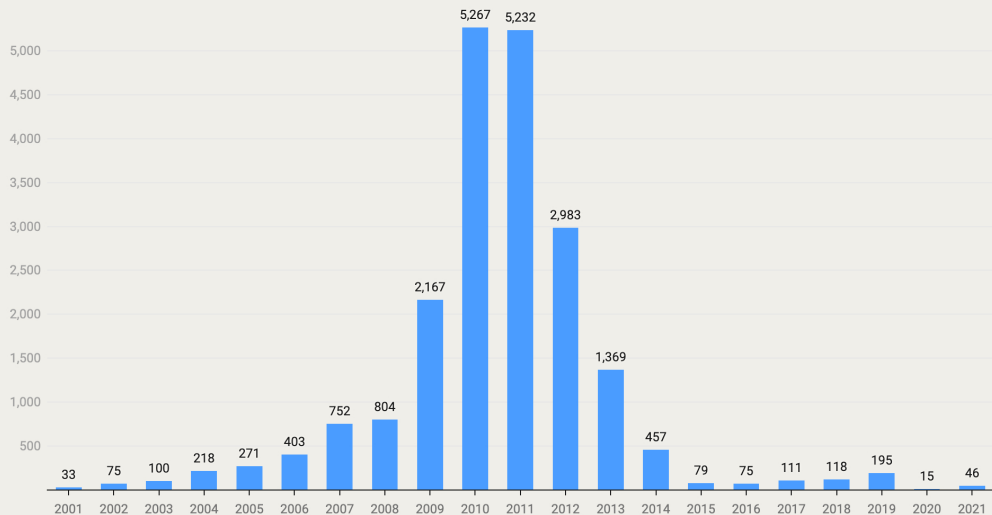
The Costs of War Project stated that “the majority of U.S. contractors are the citizens of other countries, many of whose deaths appear not to have been reported.”^[17]

US Military Wounded in Afghanistan by Year & by President

The numbers below come from the Defense Department, Defense Casualty Analysis System.^[18] 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.^[19]

	A. Year	B. Number of US Military Wounded		A. Year	B. Number of US Military Wounded	
George W. Bush	1. 2001	33	Barack Obama	12. 2012	2,983	17,629 US Military Wounded
	2. 2002	75		13. 2013	1,369	
	3. 2003	100		14. 2014	457	
	4. 2004	218		15. 2015	79	
	5. 2005	271		16. 2016	75	
	6. 2006	403		17. 2017	111	
2,656 US Military Wounded	7. 2007	752	Donald Trump	18. 2018	118	439 US Military Wounded
	8. 2008	804		19. 2019	195	
	9. 2009	2,167		20. 2020	15	
5,232 US Military Wounded	10. 2010	5,267	Joe Biden	21. 2021	46	46 US Military Wounded (as of 12/31/2021)
	11. 2011	5,232		Total	20,770	

US Military Wounded in Afghanistan, 2001 to 2021



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 Brown University estimated total congressional appropriations and spending for the Afghanistan War at \$2.261 trillion.^[20] 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 (\$296B); 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.^[21]

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

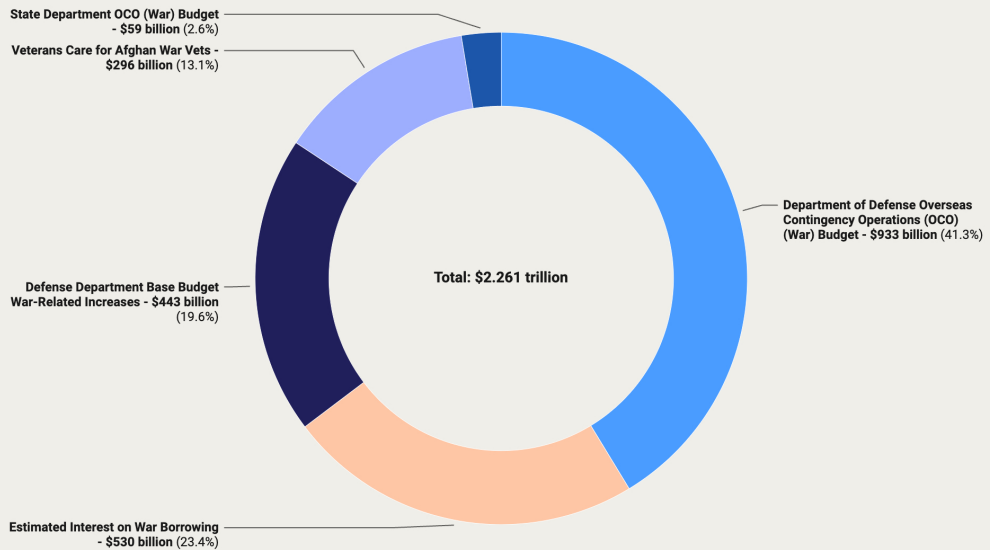


Chart: A-Mark Foundation • Source: Costs of War Project • Get the data • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

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.^[22]

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."^[23]

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.^[24] ^[25]

	A.	DOD Cost of War Totals (\$ billions)		A.	B.	
	Fiscal Year			Fiscal Year	DOD Cost of War Totals (\$ billions)	
	1.	2002	19.9	12.	2013	77.7
	2.	2003	12.3	13.	2014	59.5
	3.	2004	10.3	14.	2015	46.7
	4.	2005	11.6	15.	2016	37.8
	5.	2006	14.2	16.	2017	40.6
George W. Bush	6.	2007	20.1	17.	2018	36.0
						Barack Obama \$533.4B

BUSH \$167.7B	7.	2008	32.0	18.	2019	38.4
	8.	2009	47.3		19.	2020
TRUMP \$148.2B	9.	2010	77.0	20.	2021	34.1
	10.	2011	96.6			
	11.	2012	97.5			
					Total	\$849.7 billion

Note: Discrepancy in the total due to rounding by SIGAR, as noted in their quarterly report to Congress.^[26]

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

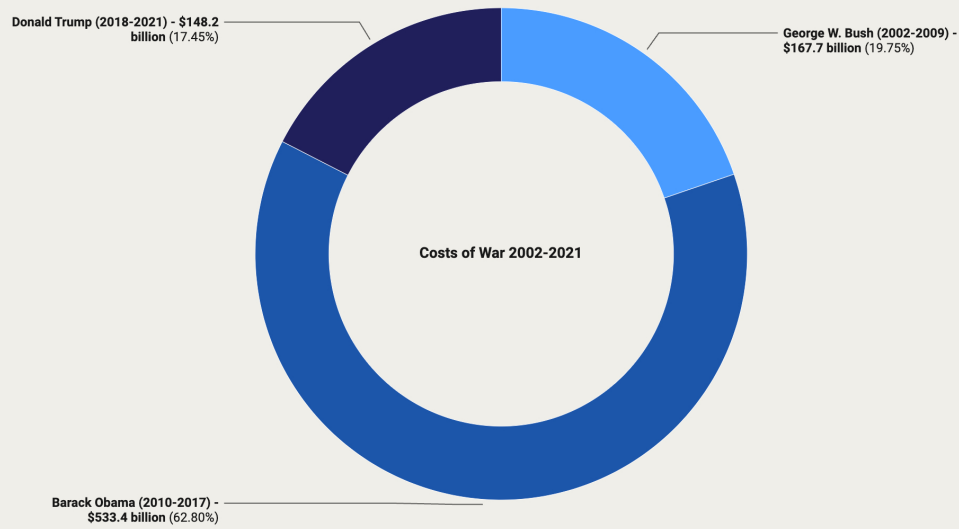


Chart: A-Mark Foundation • Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction • Get the data • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

Department of Defense Cost of War and Reconstruction in Afghanistan, FY 2002 - FY 2021 (\$ billions)

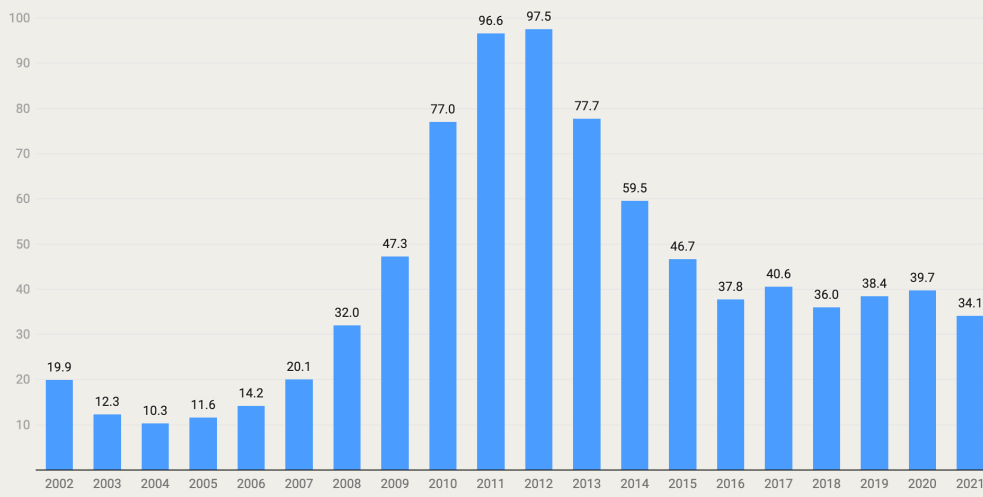


Chart: A-Mark Foundation • Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction • Get the data • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

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.^[27]

[Cite This Page](#)

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- 6 This combines the 3,917 U.S. Contractor and 6 U.S. Department of Defense Civilian deaths. There is no breakdown by year. Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz, "Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars," watson.brown.edu, September 1, 2021, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Direct%20War%20Deaths_91.21.pdf
- 7 Based on the definition of "defense contractor," the U.S. Contractor death total many contain both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals.
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- 10 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," sigar.mil, July 30, 2022, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2022-07-30qr.pdf>
- 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 inheriting 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.
- 12 Sources – 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 September 7, 2021, <https://dcas.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/app/conflictCasualties>
- 13 The Costs of War project estimates total deaths in the Afghanistan war at 176,206, according to the report by Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz, "Human Cost of Post-9/11 Wars," watson.brown.edu, September 1, 2021, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Direct%20War%20Deaths_91.21.pdf
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- 15 According to the CRS Report, "Defense Primer: Department of Defense Contractors," updated February 3, 2021: "A defense contractor, as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations, is 'any individual, firm, corporation, partnership, association, or other legal non-Federal entity that enters into a contract directly with the DOD to furnish services, supplies, or construction' (see 32 C.F.R. 158.3, 'Definitions'). ...The term 'contractor' does not refer to military servicemembers, civilian DOD career employees, or civilian political appointees." Source: Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Department of Defense Contractors," everycrsreport.com, updated February 3, 2021, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2021-02-03_IF10600_b2a74c65ae5176f2e38eb662f76acf3adec64d40.pdf
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- 19 ACLU, "The Human Cost - Civilian Casualties in Iraq & Afghanistan," aclu.org (accessed October 24, 2022), <https://www.aclu.org/human-cost-civilian-casualties-iraq-afghanistan>.
- 20 Costs of War Project, "U.S. Costs To Date For The War In Afghanistan, 2001-2021," watson.brown.edu, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/figures/2021/Human%20and%20Budgetary%20Costs%20of%20Afghan%20War%2C%202001-2021.pdf>
- 21 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,

https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Bilmes_Long-Term%20Costs%20of%20Care%20for%20Vets_Aug%202021.pdf

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- 23 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," sigar.mil, July 30, 2022, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2022-07-30qr.pdf>
- 24 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," sigar.mil, July 30, 2022, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2022-07-30qr.pdf>
- 25 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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- 27 Neta C. Crawford and Catherine Lutz, "Human and Budgetary Costs to Date of the U.S. War in Afghanistan," watson.brown.edu, April 15, 2021, <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/figures/2021/Human%20and%20Budgetary%20Costs%20of%20Afghan%20War%2C%202001-2021.pdf>

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