Good afternoon.

I want to speak today to the unfolding situation in Afghanistan, the developments that have taken place in the last week and the steps we’re taking to address the rapidly evolving events.

We went to Afghanistan almost 20 years ago with clear goals: get those who attacked us on Sept. 11, 2001, and make sure Al Qaeda could not use Afghanistan as a base from which to attack us again. We did that. We severely degraded Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. We never gave up the hunt for Osama bin Laden and we got him.

Today a terrorist threat has metastasized well beyond Afghanistan. Al Shabab in Somalia, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al Nusra in Syria, ISIS attempting to create a caliphate in Syria and Iraq and establishing affiliates in multiple countries in Africa and Asia.

American troops cannot and should not be fighting in a war and dying in a war that Afghan forces are not willing to fight for themselves. We spent over a trillion dollars. We trained and equipped an Afghan military force of some 300,000 strong. Incredibly well equipped. A force larger in size than the militaries of many of our NATO allies.

When I hosted President Ghani and Chairman Abdullah at the White House in June, and again when I spoke by phone to Ghani in July, we had very frank conversations. We talked about how Afghanistan should prepare to fight their civil wars after the U.S. military departed. To clean up the corruption in government so the government could function for the Afghan people. We talked extensively about the need for Afghan leaders to unite politically. They failed to do any of that.

I know my decision will be criticized. But I would rather take all that criticism than pass this decision on to another president of the United States, yet another one, a fifth one. Because it’s the right one, it’s the right decision for our people. The right one for our brave service members who risked their lives serving our nation. And it’s the right one for America.