

How many soldiers in Afghanistan will this year celebrate their last Christmas ever?

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This will be the last Christmas for some British soldiers and the blood of those killed will be on the hands of David Cameron and the government waging a war they know to be futile and lost.

The BBC has announced that it is sending one of its top DJs, Radio 1's Greg James, to Afghanistan [to host his radio show from Camp Bastion](#) for five days.

"I'm excited to be bringing Radio 1 to the troops and show them we appreciate their hard work," said Greg James.

One song we can be sure he will not be playing for the troops is [Ry Cooder's Christmas Time This Year](#):

*Our boys and girls will be here soon coming home from war
I'm so glad it's Christmas time this year
But they'll be going back to war again I fear
Can't they stay for Christmas time this year
Now Johnny ain't got no legs and Billy ain't got no face
Do they know it's Christmas time this year?
Tommy looks about the same but his mind is gone
Does he know it's Christmas time this year?*

We can also be sure that Greg James will not mention Caroline Munday on his programme, the mother of British soldier James Munday, who was killed — aged just 21 — in Helmand province in Afghanistan. Earlier this year, she explained why she joined the campaign initiated by MP Paul Flynn to [bring the troops home by Christmas](#):

"I know the devastation that this war has caused. Whether it's mums in Britain or Afghanistan, I know how it feels. Bring the troops home as soon as possible to stop even one more family suffering like we have."

And we can be certain Greg James will not feature the former leader of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy — now Lord — Ashdown. Last week he became the first senior British politician to declare openly that the game is up in Afghanistan. [The war is lost, he says](#), and all UK troops should be brought home immediately.

'We cannot pretend there is any more to do in Afghanistan. The urgent priority is to get out.

It is not worth wasting one more life in Afghanistan. All that we can achieved has now been achieved. All that we might have achieved if we had done things differently, has been lost. The only rational policy now is to leave quickly, in good order and in the company of our allies. This is the only cause for which further lives should be risked.'

Ashdown is saying nothing new to the anti-war movement, which has since the invasion in 2001 consistently argued that the war is unjustified and unwinnable. Vindicated yet again are those who over the past eleven years have opposed sending British troops to kill and be killed in other people's countries, at the behest of US foreign policy and its 'war on terror'.

Paddy Ashdown was joined this week by the *New York Times* — usually such an obedient flag-waver for America's imperialist wars. Reporting on the [alternative timetables](#) the US military has given President Obama for bringing US troops home, the *Times* asks why the most obvious option has not been included: don't wait till 2014, [bring the troops home now](#).

The military wants to withdraw as slowly as possible (no surprise) and keep as many troops in Afghanistan for as long as possible (even less of a surprise) ... But why not just start now? If all it takes is a year, then the United States could plausibly be out of Afghanistan by this time next year.

The United States should not be tempted, says the *Times*:

... to hang around in 2014 to provide security for Afghanistan's next presidential election – at best a thankless task and at worst an operation that risks giving the stamp of approval to what could be yet another crooked vote. And it would mean one less year of American casualties on the battlefield – and one less year spent trying to make the Afghan army into a real fighting force (that targets the Taliban and al Qaeda, and not American and other NATO forces).

The *Times* is referring to the ever-increasing "blue on green" attacks, in which US and NATO troops are being killed by the Afghan army and police recruits they are training as a replacement for the invading armies, which are supposed to leave at the end of 2014.

These "insider" attacks were probably what prompted Paddy Ashdown to go public. But he is both a politician and a former soldier, so when he says that it is time for the troops to get out, we can be sure he reflects the thinking of many of those who make the military and political decisions about this war, but who — unlike him — would rather keep British troops killing and dying, than face having to admit defeat.

It is six years since John Reid, the then British defence minister, voiced the hope that the thousands of troops he was deploying to Helmand province would eventually be able to come home "without a single shot being fired". He did so in the knowledge that up till then — 2006 — just five British troops had been killed in Afghanistan. The latest figure of British dead is 438.

How many more troops are David Cameron and his generals prepared to "sacrifice" on a raft of lies about "success" in Afghanistan before they too have to follow Paddy Ashdown and admit there is no "exit strategy" from Afghanistan that can be dressed up as some kind of

“victory”?

How many more Afghan families — already numbering tens of thousands — are going to pay the price in loved ones lost or wounded in a war with no purpose?

As Paul Flynn MP told the House of Commons — and was [kicked out of parliament](#) for doing so — the government is using British troops as “human shields” to protect their own reputations. Soldiers, he said, are being killed in a war by government ministers who have the power to stop it.

Paul Flynn made the comparison with the first world war, in which it was said, “Politicians lied, and soldiers died.” The troops are being “sent to die in vain in a war from which we should withdraw and which the country wants us to withdraw,” he said.

David Cameron and his government show no signs that they are listening to Paul Flynn, Paddy Ashdown or the British public — over 70 percent of which wants the troops home now. So this will be the last Christmas for some of those soldiers in Camp Bastion listening to Radio 1 DJ Greg James. And [the blood of those killed](#) will be on the hands of David Cameron and the government waging a war they know to be futile and lost.

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