

Lawmaker urges recall

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Lindholm, a veteran, says issue of troops overseas is personal

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — Last month, Rep. Tyler Lindholm, R-Sundance, penned an op-ed in the *Star-Tribune* that seemed out of the lane that a Majority Whip of the Wyoming House of Representatives would typically occupy.

Its contents? An appeal to Washington — and to Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney — to end a foreign war neither he nor any of his colleagues in Cheyenne had any role in starting.

“Our people, especially my fellow veterans and their families, are tired of endless wars,” Lindholm wrote. “It’s past time we bring our troops home from foreign entanglements in Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere around the globe.”

The op-ed seemed uncharacteristic for Lindholm, whose topics of interest typically include subjects like blockchain and corporate law, adhering to what some around the capital have described as a “live and let live” brand of politics. But, for the five-year serviceman in the U.S. Navy, ending the U.S. military’s decadeslong involvement in the Middle East, and the ongoing conflict he’d left behind more than a dozen years ago, was “personal,” he told the *Star-Tribune* in an interview this month.

Toward the end of his military service in 2006, he said, “there was a solid argument on why we should stay,” keeping a consistent presence to stabilize a region that had suffered from years of war, political upheaval and decades of foreign intervention.

“Now, it’s 2019, and I have a 13-year-old who, five years from now, could possibly serve in the same war her dad did,” he said. “And I think we’ve stretched our legs a little too far on this deal. There are lots of arguments to be made, like bringing democracy to these people but ... clearly, they don’t want democracy. We’ve tried. We’ve given it to them on a silver platter. And what we’re doing isn’t working.”

On the national stage, however, Wyoming is among the last place federal policy makers would expect to hear calls for withdrawal. Like her father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, Rep. Cheney has long advocated for propping up the Middle East through American intervention, often supporting the maintenance of a military presence to stave off the influence of foreign powers like Russia and often calling for increased funding for the U.S. military.

At home, in the meantime, support for the war has begun to slip. Approval for U.S. military operations abroad has decidedly fallen to a minority of Americans, according to data from the Pew Research Center, while a majority of military veterans have expressed in several public polls that it’s time to pull troops out of the Middle East.

Meanwhile, defense funding has bloated to a level that is rapidly becoming unsustainable. A recent analysis in *The Nation* showed that the annual cost of U.S. military operations in the more than 80 countries it maintains a presence exceeds \$1.25 trillion every year — an amount larger than the gross domestic product of all but 15 countries. Meanwhile, the nation’s debt has grown to crisis levels,



Rep. Tyler Lindholm, R-Sundance, left, talks with Rep. Michael Greear, R-Washakie, during the Wyoming Legislature's 2018 session in Cheyenne. Lindholm recently wrote an op-ed encouraging the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Middle East. Josh Galemore, *Star-Tribune*

which Wyoming Sen. Mike Enzi has made the focus of his 22-year career in Washington.

Though those decisions are made by the U.S. Congress, over the Teton Range in Idaho, a three-term lawmaker saw a way he might be able to spur movement toward ending a war he too left behind more than a dozen years ago.

There, Dan McKnight, a former Idaho Army National Guard sergeant and an Afghanistan veteran, began organizing a bipartisan movement in January, hoping to persuade his congressman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch and the rest of Idaho’s delegation to bring American troops home.

In February, the group succeeded in getting a response.

“We’ve spent \$2 trillion in Afghanistan, and we’ve shed lots of American blood there,” Risch said. “I’m with you. I am through trying to do nation-building with countries that don’t want it. They’ve got to show some type of an appre-

ciation, some type of an embracement of it, and they simply don’t.”

With his column last month, Lindholm hoped to get a conversation going. But then, people started reaching out, expressing a similar sentiment. Empowered, he made a website

— wybringouttroopshome.com — and said he will be beginning a campaign to urge Wyoming’s delegation to follow in Risch’s footsteps.

Just days after 130 servicemen from Wyoming were deployed overseas, Lindholm believes now is as good a time as any.

“Now, we’ve actually got a president of the United States who wants to stop the nation-building also and, for the most part, it has been about bringing the troops home,” he said. “I think we carry most of the votes in Congress in that regard. All we have to do now is pull the trigger, and our federal delegation has the power to push that forward.”