For 72 days in 2001, Alexis Fundora flew missions to and over Afghanistan in the nation's war on terror as an airborne radar technician in the Air Force.

One time, his plane was almost blown out of sky while Fundora, a West Palm Beach native, was flying across the mountainous border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, an area teeming with Al-Qaeda operatives.

"My heart was pumping," recalled Fundora, 30. "It was close."

After President Obama on Friday declared the war in Iraq over and announced that all U.S. troops would be leaving the region by year's end, Fundora was pleased.

"Those soldiers should have been home a long time ago," he said. "We weren't really accomplishing much over there."

Fundora summed up how many Palm Beach County veterans felt about the president's total troop withdrawal announcement.

"This was one war we had no business being in," said Bernard Harris, 90, a World War II veteran who lives in Lake Worth. "It was such a waste, taking lives like that."

Ed Greenfield, 86, another World War II veteran, said he's happy the remaining American troops are scheduled to be home before the new year.

"Maybe we'll get this country back on track and be like we were 10 years ago," Greenfield said.

Don, who served in Vietnam and declined to give his last name, said once Osama bin Laden was killed in May, the country's mission had been accomplished.

"What else did we have to do over there?" said the 67-year-old West Palm Beach resident. "We need to do more work in the United States. We're spending too much time overseas."

Jeffrey Morton, a professor of international law at Florida Atlantic University, said that by withdrawing all troops, the U.S. is acknowledging the war as a failed experiment.
"It was a very expensive failed experiment," Morton said. "This is saying that the ability to nation build is so incredibly difficult and complicated that getting half the job done is as probably as good as it's going to get."

Fundora, however, was more blunt.

"So many young soldiers lost their lives in a war that didn't resolve anything at all," Fundora said.