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## India could send troops to Afghanistan under UN mission: expert

May 26, 2017

With the Trump Administration looking at other countries to share the responsibilities in addressing major global challenges, a prominent Indian defense expert on Thursday told a Washington audience that New Delhi could perhaps be persuaded to send up to a division of Indian troops – around 15,000 -- to Afghanistan under a United Nations Peacekeeping mission.

“If invited, if there is a UN peacekeeping force ... it is my considered view that perhaps India could be persuaded to send up to a division, provided the logistics are in place, provided Pakistan's so-called sensibilities can be put in place,” Brig (rtd) Gurmeet Kanwal, from the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, said in a close door round table at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Kanwal, who is currently in Washington DC, however said that this is his considerate view and that at present there is no appetite in India to send any troops to Afghanistan. India, years ago, has already turned down a request to send troops to Iraq. India, he said, could be willing to send its troops to Afghanistan only under a UN peacekeeping mission if it feels that this war-torn country is headed to a civil war and that would hit its strategic national interest.

Kanwal described this move as in India's vital national interest.

Pakistani sensitivities, in this case could be addressed by ensuring that the Indian troops are stationed in the wester part of Afghanistan and far away from Af-Pak border. In that case the

Afghan National Security Forces could concentrate itself in fighting against insurgents along the border with Pakistan, he said.

However, at present the mood in New Delhi, he said, is against it. The consensus is no, he said. But then, if India wants to enhance its role globally then it cannot shy away from supporting and helping a friendly] government when they ask for help. “We intervene when they ask for help,” Kanwal said.

Noting that the Taliban are showing signs of gaining momentum, he said this could lead to a civil war. India, he said, supports the elimination of terrorism from Afghanistan, destruction of the sanctuary that the Taliban and Al Qaeda have been given an end to the export of terrorism.