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US to Send 4,000 More Ground Troops to Afghanistan

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Trump Administration officials familiar with the decision-making process say that the Pentagon will be sending “almost 4,000” more US ground troops into Afghanistan soon, with the official announcement on the deployment likely to come as early as next week.

The decision on troop levels had been expected quite some time ago, and this week’s announcement that President Trump has decided to delegate the matter entirely to Defense Secretary James Mattis. This both sped up the process and meant a large escalation was likely, as Mattis has been reported to have favored plans with larger numbers of troops being sent.

The 4,000 troops will be in addition to 8,500 US troops already in Afghanistan, and the escalation is widely expected to also see other NATO member nations agree to commit more troops to the country, albeit much smaller deployments, and likely with less willingness than the US to send troops into combat situations.

Officially, the US combat operation in Afghanistan ended long ago, but increasingly the US is deploying ground troops into areas being contested militarily by the Taliban, desperate to slow the rate of territory loss the Afghan government is facing, and the addition deployments are likely to add to that policy.