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## Thousands of US, NATO troops to stay in Afghanistan post 2014

2/22/2013



**The United States and its European allies are to keep thousands of their soldiers in Afghanistan beyond a previously agreed 2014 deadline to withdraw their troops.**

The proposal was unveiled on Friday by the US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta during a meeting of NATO member states in Brussels.

Panetta reportedly told his European counterparts that 8,000 to 12,000 troops would stay in the war-ravaged country as part of a mission to train and support Afghan forces. However, the extent of each country's contribution has yet to be announced as the alliance remains divided over the costs.

Some sources say up to 10,000 of those troops will be Americans.

The German Defense Minister Thomas de Maiziere also indicated that his country's forces will remain in northern Afghanistan after the 2014 deadline.

The US led the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan under the pretext of fighting the Taliban and al-Qaeda militants holed in the country.

The offensive did topple the Taliban regime but the prolonged war has failed to put an end to militancy and violence remains rampant in Afghanistan despite the presence of some 102,000 troops foreign troops, 66,000 of them Americans.

The increasing number of military casualties in Afghanistan has caused widespread anger in the United States and other NATO member states, undermining public support for the decade-long US-led war in the Asian country.