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Australia combat troops leave Afghanistan

12/16/2013

The last contingent of Australian combat troops has left a military base in southern Afghanistan to end their involvement in the 12-year-old war that left 40 of them dead, Prime Minister Tony Abbott says.

The Australian soldiers closed Tarin Kot military base in Uruzgan Province on Sunday and were headed home on Monday, Abbott announced.

“This war is ending, not with victory, not with defeat, but with hope that Afghanistan is a better place and Uruzgan in particular is a better place for our presence,” Abbott said. “I firmly believe that to be the case.”

The Australian military has maintained a permanent presence at Tarin Kot base since 2005.

“We know that they’ve paid a high price - 40 dead and 261 seriously wounded - but that sacrifice has not been in vain,” Abbott stated.

Australian officials say they will keep some 400 Australians in Afghanistan, mostly in Kabul and Kandahar, in non-combat roles to train and advise Afghan security forces.

“None of them are expected to be involved in combat,” Abbott said.

In October, the Australian prime minister said that more than 1,000 troops would withdraw from the southern province before the end of this year.