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Insurgency to continue if US forces stay in Afghanistan: Ex-ISI chief

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The former Pakistani military intelligence – Inter-service Intelligence (ISI) chief, Gen. Hamid Gul, has said that the Taliban-led insurgency will continue to persist if the American forces stay in Afghanistan.

In the an interview with the local newspaper, The News International, the former ISI chief, said the complete withdrawal of the US forces is “the first and foremost prerequisite for peace in Afghanistan”.

“First, it announced to keep 9,800 troops but now it has increased the number to 10,800 troops. This is not withdrawal. Peace would not come in Afghanistan. I always say that two fs — freedom and faith — are an integral part of the Afghan psyche,” Gen. (retd) Hamid Gul said.

He said the Afghan people will never tolerate occupation of their land and will fight back. So, if American troops stay in Afghanistan, attacks will [continue to] happen. Nothing can stop it. The military operation in North Waziristan is a success so far but it would not be able to serve the purpose unless the US leaves Afghanistan,” he added.

The remarks by Retd. Gen. Hamid Gul comes as the US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said earlier this month that up to 10,800 US troops would remain in Afghanistan for the first few months of next year.

Hagel said the original plan to cut the troop levels to 9,800 by the end of this year was abandoned since the planned troop commitments by US allies for the NATO non-combat mission – Resolute Support mission starting in January have been slow to materialize.

The new government of Afghanistan signed a bilateral security agreement with Washington late in September, providing a legal frame work for the presence of US forces in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

A similar agreement – Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was also signed by the Afghan government with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to pave the way for the presence of NATO troops in the country to implement the new non-comabt mission.