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Obama Suspends Afghanistan Troop Cutbacks

By Jason Ditz
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Compounding several previous delays in drawdowns that would've ended the US occupation of Afghanistan by the end of this year, President Obama today has announced a suspension of even the modest troop reductions planned for the rest of his term in office, intending now to keep 8,400 troops in the country through the end of his term.

Though Obama had initially announced intentions to get the last of the troops out in 2016, he had already revised that back in October, saying he intended to leave about 5,500 troops there. Following recommendations from his latest new commander, even that modest drawdown is shelved.

This appears to be the last decision on Afghan troop levels of Obama's eight years in office, and will leave the war to his successor. Given that the current commander was pushing for around

9,800 troops to be in Afghanistan by year's end, it's likely that successor will be pressured by the commander to continue the conflict, and potentially even escalate it.

Recent reports out of the war have suggested it is going as poorly as ever, after nearly 15 years of US occupation the Taliban has more territory now than at any time since the late 2001 invasion. The Afghan military is continuing to lose ground to the Taliban, and President Obama recently revised the rules of engagement to allow even more US airstrikes in the country, desperate to slow the mounting losses.