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NATO to Withdraw 40,000 Troops Next Year, But War is Not Over

Posted By [John Glaser](#)

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NATO will [reduce its troop levels in Afghanistan by 40,000 by the end of 2012](#), according to the Pentagon, as the overall military presence in the country begins to decrease.

By that date, America's share of the pullout will include 33,000 soldiers - one-third of 101,000 U.S. troops who were in Afghanistan in June.

The gradual drawdown began late this year. About 14,000 foreign troops will be withdrawn by the end of December: 10,000 of those are American, 2,850 were Canadian, France and Britain will each send about 400 home, etc. The drawdown will get steeper next year.

But observers should not be fooled into believing the Obama administration's 2014 date of full withdrawal from Afghanistan. The U.S. [plan has been to maintain a military presence](#) there for the foreseeable future, with [numerous officials recognizing considerable troop levels beyond 2014](#).

In [a recent talk at the Council on Foreign Relations](#), under secretary of defense for policy at the Department of Defense Michèle Flournoy, explained that "2014 is not a withdrawal date—it's an inflection point."

Afghans at that time "are still going to need support from the international community," she said, and the U.S. has "been negotiating a strategic partnership agreement with the Afghan government that would lay out an enduring strategic partnership far into the future."

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And Afghan President Hamid Karzai has tried hard to lock in that strategic partnership, as his council of tribal elders in mid-November [tacitly approved a robust strategic agreement and U.S. military presence through 2024](#).