

US to leave 10,000 troops in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON, USA: The administration of President Barack Obama aims to keep around 10,000 US troops in Afghanistan after formal combat operations in that country end in 2014, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on Sunday (25 November).

Citing unnamed senior US officials, the newspaper said the plan was in line with recommendations presented by General John Allen, commander of US and international forces in Afghanistan, who has proposed a force between 6,000 and 15,000 US troops.

This force will conduct training and counter-terrorism operations after the NATO mission in Afghanistan formally concludes at the end of 2014, the report said.

About 67,000 US troops are currently deployed in Afghanistan alongside 37,000 coalition troops and 337,000 local soldiers and police that make up the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

The United States and Afghanistan launched crucial talks on November 15 on the status of US forces remaining in Afghanistan after the NATO withdrawal of combat troops in 2014.

The US has stressed that it is not seeking permanent bases in Afghanistan.

It is also likely to shy away from a security guarantee, which would require it to come to the nation's assistance against aggressors.

That, however, is seen as one of the targets of Afghan negotiators.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai is said to be willing to accept a US troop presence post-2014 as long as his key demands are met.

According to *The Wall Street Journal* his main request is that American forces come under the jurisdiction of Afghan courts.

However, the paper said, some defence analysts outside of the US government believe that the training and counter-terrorism mission would require a much larger US presence -- perhaps as many as 30,000 troops.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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