

# *44 Afghan Troops Training in U.S. Go Missing from Military Bases*

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Washington, October 11 (RHC)-- More than 40 troops from Afghanistan visiting the United States for military training have vanished in less than two years, according to the U.S. Defense Department.

A total of 44 Afghan troops have gone missing in the U.S. since January 2015, Pentagon spokesman Adam Stump told Reuters. Since September last year alone, eight Afghan troops have left military bases without authorization.

Spokesman Adam Stump said: "The Defense Department is assessing ways to strengthen eligibility criteria for training in ways that will reduce the likelihood of an individual Afghan willingly absconding from training in the U.S. and going AWOL (absent without leave)."

According to U.S. officials, Afghans in the U.S. training program are vetted to ensure they are not affiliated with militant groups and have not participated in human rights abuses before being allowed into the country.

The U.S. has spent more than \$60 billion to train and equip Afghan troops since 2002, but security

remains precarious. The Taliban has seized a number of districts in Helmand, Baghlan and Takhar provinces in recent months.

Experts said the troops leaving are mainly due to low morale and insufficient training to fight the Taliban militant group, in addition to a lack of economic opportunities in the impoverished country -- and the promise of a new life in the United States.

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