

U.S. Military Recommended 20,000 Troops in Afghanistan



Washington, October 20 (RHC)-- U.S. military leaders have recommended that Washington should leave as many as 20,000 American troops in Afghanistan after 2016, says U.S. Senator John McCain.

"Well, [the] first recommendation I'm told was 20,000," the Arizona Republican said in an interview aired Monday night, according to The Hill.

"I would have, I think, been comfortable with, say, 10,000 to 15,000. But -- again -- it's very clear that what you need to do is withdraw on basic conditions, not on calendar," the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee added.

President Barack Obama plans to keep 5,500 of U.S. troops in Afghanistan when he leaves office in 2017. Obama had originally planned to withdraw almost all U.S. troops from Afghanistan by the end of next year and keep a small, embassy-based military presence in the Asian country.

But the Pentagon has been arguing for months that Kabul needed additional U.S. military presence in order to defeat a resurgent Taliban movement.

McCain contended that trying to reach the "bare minimum" would further endanger the lives of U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan. He said the recent U.S. bombing of a hospital in Kunduz, which

according to U.S. officials was a mistake, showed the Afghans still needed US support.

"They don't have an air force. They don't have good intelligence. They don't have [medical evacuation] capability, for example. There are so many things that we can do in support that we would have to do," he said.

McCain attributed the failure of Afghan forces to keep their country secure to a swift withdrawal of U.S. forces and a continued Taliban sanctuary in Pakistan.

McCain also said the U.S. still has troops in many other countries and Americans are not calling for their withdrawal because they are safe. "We got 38,000 troops still in Korea. We've got troops in Germany. We've got troops in Bosnia. We have left U.S. military forces behind ever since World War II," he said.

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