

# *NATO to Maintain 12,000 Troops in Afghanistan in 2016*

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Brussels, December 2 (RHC)-- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has decided to keep some 12,000 troops in Afghanistan for 2016, abandoning plans to cut its troop levels by the end of the current year.

The foreign ministers of the 28-member Western military alliance agreed on the move during a meeting in Brussels, Belgium, on Tuesday. This comes as NATO's Resolute Support advice and training mission was due to end in 2015.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the soldiers include about 7,000 American forces while the rest are from the other NATO member states and allies such as the non-NATO member Georgia. Stoltenberg claimed that NATO is in Afghanistan to prevent the country from again becoming "a safe haven for terrorists."

U.S. President Barack Obama also announced in October that his administration would keep some 10,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan for the next year since Afghan forces "are still not as strong as they need to be." Unlike Washington, NATO has never set a date for ending the "Resolute Support" training mission in Afghanistan.

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