

# *U.S. Military Will Retain 'Enduring' Presence in Middle East and Persian Gulf*

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Washington, March 10 (RHC)-- The U.S. Department of Defense has announced that the U.S. military would retain an "enduring" presence in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. In its latest strategy document, the Pentagon said it would also keep up relations to "stalwart" allies in Europe.

The United States has 35,000 troops in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. U.S. military facilities in the region include a base for its Fifth Naval Fleet in Bahrain and one for its forces in Afghanistan.

Washington is pressing the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai to sign a bilateral security deal in order to keep thousands of American troops in Afghanistan beyond 2014. The U.S. military has deployed 350,000 troops to about 130 foreign countries around the world. The U.S. and its allies regularly stage naval exercises in the Persian Gulf.

The new document comes despite Washington's focus to increase military presence in the Asia-Pacific. Regarding the Pacific region, U.S. officials cited ship building plans, deployments of marines to Australia and an expansion of joint military training and drills.

"We will continue our contributions to the US rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, seeking to preserve peace and stability in a region that is increasingly central to US political, economic, and security interests," said the Quadrennial Defense Review, an update of the military's global strategic outlook.

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