

US to Deploy 18,000 Troops to Afghanistan

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The United States is sending 18,000 more troops to Afghanistan by late spring, as part of a 30,000-strong force already promised by President Barack Obama. The troops are being deployed later than expected. The remaining 12,000 will be sent to Afghanistan in the summer, with most in place by August.

At present there are 70,000 US troops in Afghanistan. The extra troops have been sent to take part in a large offensive against Taliban fighters. The highest US officer Admiral Mike Mullen says the Taliban have reinforced their positions in most Afghan provinces.

The US Congress has set aside an extra 130 billion dollars for the mission. President Obama has requested another 33 billion dollars.

The training of Afghan troops to defend their own country is a major priority, but commanders on the ground complain that there is a shortage of trainers, in particular from their European allies. US troops are due to withdraw in July 2011.

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