

Trump says U.S. to keep 8,600 troops in Afghanistan after deal with Taliban



Washington, August 30 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump has said the United States will keep thousands of troops in Afghanistan even if Washington reaches an agreement with the Taliban.

Trump said in an interview with Fox News radio on Thursday that U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan would drop to 8,600 if a deal were reached. "We're going down to 8,600 [troops] and then we make a determination from there," the U.S. president said. "We're always going to have a presence."

Trump also said if another attack on the U.S. originated from Afghanistan, "we would come back with a force like ... never before." Trump went on to say that there was to be no complete withdrawal and that the U.S. would keep a force to gather "high intelligence."

The U.S. president earlier boasted he could "win" the Afghanistan war "in a week" without using nuclear weapons. Washington has been talking to the Taliban since at least 2018, when Trump said he wanted to end military involvement in Afghanistan.

The Taliban, which now control or have influence in about half of Afghanistan's territory, have held several rounds of direct talks with US officials in the Qatari capital Doha since October.

The negotiations take place almost 18 years after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan to overthrow a ruling Taliban regime. U.S. troops were first sent to Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

American forces have since remained bogged down in Afghanistan through the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and now, Donald Trump. The Taliban say any peace deal is conditional to the exit of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

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