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We will never be gone from Afghanistan', US defense secretary says

February 23, 2015

The US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter has said the United States will never be gone from Afghanistan while on insisting on the importance of the country.

Speaking to US troops at TAAC South's Kandhar Airfield headquarters, Carter said "We'll never be gone from Afghanistan because Afghanistan is an important country in the world."

He said "but when our presence here is reduced to something much smaller than today, we want to make sure that the Afghans themselves are able to preserve the environment our forces have created over the last few years, one of relative security and stability."

Carter told the men and women in uniform that he'd met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Dr. Abdulla Abdullah in Kabul.

"There's one thing President Ghani said that I want to share with you. He said, 'Would you please tell your people that I appreciate the sacrifice they have made for my country.'"

Carter said, "Just think about that — remember that."

Carter made a stop in Kandahar on Sunday as part of his first official trip to Afghanistan as defense secretary to thank U.S. troops there for their dedication to the mission and the progress they and their NATO and Afghan allies have achieved.