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US GENERAL SEEKS ‘REVIEW’ OF PLANS TO REDUCE TROOPS NUMBERS IN AFGHANISTAN

BY JASON DITZ

March 8, 2016

Speaking to the Senate Armed Services Committee today, Central Commander Gen. Lloyd Austin warned that the Taliban are increasingly active in Afghanistan, and challenging Afghan forces on the ground, saying its time for the administration to “review” the plans to reduce the number of US ground troops in the country.

The US already “suspended” the drawdown early last year,, and then “halted” it outright, effectively ending the possibility that the US would end its occupation of Afghanistan before the end of President Obama’s term in office.

In recent months, however, officials have suggested that they need to actually start growing the number of troops in Afghanistan instead of just endlessly stalling at current levels. Austin confirmed that Lt. Gen. Nicholson, the new commander in Afghanistan, is “assessing” the situation right now, and he has previously talked up the idea of more troops.

NATO has been pushing Afghanistan to go more on the offensive against the Taliban in the face of growing defeats, and it is likely that selling that concept to the Afghan government will come with pledges of more ground troops to back them up.