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U.S. Intelligence Official Says Afghan Security Likely To ‘Deteriorate’

May 12, 2017

The U.S. national intelligence director says the security situation in Afghanistan will “almost certainly” continue to “deteriorate” over the next 18 months.

Dan Coats’ comments on May 11 to the Senate Intelligence Committee come as the U.S. military has announced plans to send 3,000 additional troops to bolster the fight against the Taliban and other Islamist militants in Afghanistan.

U.S.-led forces have been fighting in Afghanistan for 16 years after driving the Taliban from power.

U.S. combat operations officially ended in 2014, with a smaller force of 13,000 NATO troops, including about 8,400 Americans, remaining.

But the Taliban has been resurgent in recent years and controls large portions of the country.

“The political and security situation in Afghanistan will also almost certainly deteriorate through 2018, even with a modest increase in the military assistance by the U.S. and its partners,” Coats told senators.

In another regional matter, Coats said it appears Iran is respecting the terms of the nuclear agreement it struck with six world powers in 2015.

He said the deal — under which Iran significantly limited its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief — extended the amount of time Iran would need to produce sufficient material for a nuclear weapon and increased the transparency of its nuclear activities.

Coats also said Russia and other countries, including China, North Korea, and Iran, are using cyberspace to target the United States and its allies and will do so in future.

Coats said Russia is a threat to U.S. government, military, diplomatic, business, and critical infrastructure.

Coats said Iran also is making use of its high-tech capabilities, and China is targeting the U.S. government and American businesses. He says such activity has diminished since U.S.-China cybercommitments in 2015.