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Putin Urges NATO to Stay in Afghanistan

By Jason Ditz

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Russian President Vladimir Putin today expressed ‘[regret](#)’ at the idea that NATO might end its occupation of Afghanistan at the end of 2014, saying that he believes NATO should remain in the country for as long as it takes to “get the job done.”

“They have made the commitment, let them follow through on it,” Putin added, [saying](#) that it is in Russia’s national interest to keep NATO troops fighting against heroin smuggling in Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union [invaded](#) Afghanistan in 1979, and occupied the nation for a decade, leaving in early 1989 after the war had virtually bankrupted them. NATO launched its own invasion in 2001, and has been occupying the nation ever since.

Nominally, NATO is supposed to “end” the war in 2014, but in practice it will only mean the redefinition of the conflict as Afghan government led. President Obama signed a pact earlier this year to keep US ground troops in the nation through 2024.