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Bulgaria Forces to Withdraw from Kabul Beginning of 2013

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Bulgaria's **government** will withdraw the country's **rangers** in the **NATO** security mission in **Afghanistan** by the end of 2014, the deputy defense minister has confirmed.

The pull-out will happen in three stages.

The two medical teams from the hospital in **Herat** will be withdrawn in 2013, not in 2012 as initially planned.

"The contingent guarding the airport in Kabul will be pulled at the beginning of 2013, while the one guarding the airport in **Kandahar** will come home by the end of 2014," Deputy Defense Minister Valentin Radev said in an interview for state news agency BTA.

"We have already announced our decision and it remains unchanged – only those Bulgarians who can help and train Afghani security forces will remain deployed there," he added.

The worst incident with Bulgarian soldiers in **Afghanistan** to date occurred in January 2010, when four Bulgarians were wounded in a **Taliban rocket** attack, with one of them subsequently losing his hand. The incident coincided with the visit to the base of then Bulgarian Defense Minister and now Foreign Affairs Minister, **Nikolay Mladenov**.

In 2010, Bulgaria increased its **Afghanistan** contingent as part of the **ISAF/NATO** forces to 600 troops; half are stationed at the **Kandahar airport**.