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Despite Threats, US Stick to Afghan Strategy: Panetta

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WASHINGTON - The United States and its international partners would stick to their plan for Afghanistan, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said on Friday, insisting their strategy remained on the right track.

"In Afghanistan, we continue, obviously, to face challenges, but we are steadily moving towards transition there," Panetta in his speech on the State of the Military in Virginia.

General John Allen, commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, had put into place a very effective campaign plan that provided for the transition of areas to Afghan security and governance, he said.

"It's not going to be easy. It is a war; we are going to continue to confront challenges because it is a war. But we have a successful plan and we're going to stick to it," he the secretary added.

Referring to his recent meeting with NATO ministers, he said everybody came together and said they had successful plans. "Yes, we face threats; we're going to continue to confront those threats; but our goal is to complete this mission, and we will."

He said the Pentagon would face cuts of about \$500 billion in projected spending over 10 years as a result of planned cuts known as sequestration.

