

## South Korean troops leaving Afghanistan

*by UPI*

SEOUL -- South Korea's Defense Ministry on Monday announced its 210 soldiers serving in Afghanistan would be recalled before presidential elections next month. While Washington had asked Seoul to extend the tour, which was scheduled to expire at the end of the year, the government had promised Taliban insurgents in July it would end its military role in the country in exchange for the release of 21 South Korean aid workers kidnapped by the group, the Yonhap news agency reported. However, the government isn't abandoning Afghanistan altogether, as there are plans to send about 20 civilian specialists to help in regional reconstruction, the report said. Defense sources told Yonhap the 150 engineers and 60 medics will leave Afghanistan on Dec. 14, five days before South Korea's national election. With regard to Iraq, the ministry also proposed to parliament withdrawing 600 troops by next month, leaving 650 South Korean soldiers in place, the report said.

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