

## U.S. taking Afghan leadership

*by UPI*

WASHINGTON -- The United States is said to be increasingly taking over the Afghanistan war with more troops and civilians in the country this year, officials said.

U.S. President Barack Obama has called for an additional 17,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, bringing the number of foreign troops to nearly 90,000, nearly two-thirds of them Americans, The Washington Post said,

The number of U.S. civilian officials will also grow by at least 50 percent, to more than 900 under the new Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy Obama is expected to soon announce.

Administration officials say U.S. diplomats and development experts plan to spread into relatively peaceful western and northern regions of Afghanistan. That area was left to other NATO governments.

New U.S. resources and leadership will be expected to deal with critical issues such as counter-narcotics efforts and strengthening local government institutions.

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