

NATO troops not leaving Afghanistan

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan - NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said in Pakistan Tuesday the military alliance has no plans to pull its troops out of Afghanistan.

Scheffer was in Pakistan to discuss regional security with its leaders because of the growing terrorist violence along the border and inside Afghanistan.

"My answer always is -- and let me repeat it here -- that my expectation is that NATO forces will be there for the foreseeable future," said Scheffer, Voice of American reported.

The force, led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has about 35,000 troops in Afghanistan. The troops have been conducting a major offensive in southern Afghanistan to put down Taliban violence, the report said.

Speaking to reporters in Islamabad, Scheffer praised Pakistan's efforts but said more needs to be done in the region.

Officials in Afghanistan and the United States say Taliban militants have set up a number of safe havens inside Pakistan, from where they mount attacks inside Afghanistan. Pakistan has denied the claim.

Pakistan Foreign Secretary Khurshid Kasuri said his country has deployed twice as many troops and suffered twice as many casualties as NATO.

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