
KABUL WANTS AUSTRALIA'S MILITARY PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN TO CONTINUE

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After 14-and-a-half years of involvement in the war-torn country, Australia's role is now chiefly one of advising and assisting the Afghan security forces.

And while the Australian forces will remain in Afghanistan for at least three more years, the Commander of the Kabul Garrison Command, Major-General Salim Ibrahimi, says he would prefer that commitment extended, warning too that terrorism "doesn't have a border".

"They bring a lot of changes here," Maj Gen Ibrahimi said, speaking at the grounds of the Kabul Garrison Command compound.

"We work on every single thing shoulder-to-shoulder and try to find a solution for whatever problem we have."

"We want them here permanently, we want them to be working with us shoulder-to-shoulder."

THE TALIBAN AND AFGHANISTAN

Taliban announces start of spring offensive in Afghanistan

The Taliban announced the start of their spring offensive on Tuesday, pledging to launch large-scale offensives against government strongholds backed by suicide and guerrilla attacks to drive Afghanistan's Western-backed government from power.

The comments come after a blast last week signalled the deadly beginning of the Taliban's annual spring offensive, and amid further signs of a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan.

The attack last Tuesday in central Kabul during the morning rush hour - which killed at least 64 people and wounded scores more - came two days after the United Nations said that civilian casualties in Afghanistan for the first three months of 2016 were two per cent higher than in the same period of 2015.

There were more than 11,000 civilian casualties in Afghanistan last year - the highest number since 2001. And the Taliban holds more territory than it has at any time since 2001.

Since February, the Kabul Central Command has been under the wing of a team of 11 Australian advisers, led by Colonel Andrew McBaron.

They are already proving effective. But "forever is a long time," Colonel McBaron said.

"I don't think that we'll be here forever. I am very pleased with the way the Afghan security forces are progressing in their development. There's always going to be setbacks, that's just life.

"But every day we see improvements here.

The comments from both men come after Air Vice Marshal Tim Innes, Australia's commander of operations in the Middle East and Afghanistan, said last week that Australian forces would remain in Afghanistan for at least three more years.

"At the moment I think we've committed for another three years - when we get to the end of that period we'll reconsider it," he told reporters at Camp Baird.

Still, Maj Gen Ibrahimi warns that terrorist groups like the Taliban are not just a threat to Afghanistan.

"They are threat for all the countries and I think we kind of lucky that we have all the security forces from all over the world (and) we try to keep them busy here and try to get rid of them before they get into other countries to do these type of bad activity," he said.