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US considers withdrawing troops from Kosovo

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The United States is considering the withdrawal of its troops from Kosovo in 2008 due to a lack of European contribution to the troops in Afghanistan, according to US Defence Secretary Robert Gates.

Gates has ordered that the 1,600 U.S. troops in Kosovo remain until summer 2008, but then will reconsider the deployment based on Europe's progress in fulfilling its promises in Afghanistan.

The secretary had wrestled with the idea of moving our forces in Kosovo to Afghanistan but decided late this week to extend our KFOR presence until next summer," Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said.

"But beyond that is very much up in the air. The secretary is disappointed in NATO's inability to live up to its commitments and if that doesn't change before then, he's prepared to go to the secretary of state and to the president to discuss yanking our troops out of Kosovo," Morrell said.

Gates, on a visit to Kiev, also said NATO allies should be prepared for the Kosovo aftermath of the December 10 deadline for the Troika report to the UN, whatever the outcome.

"We are giving the troika talks a chance, but we are realistic", he said during a defence forum in Ukraine. "Nations must plan for what happens after December 10", he added.

Meanwhile, in New York, State Secretary Condoleezza Rice said she expected to work "together" with Moscow on finding a resolution of the Kosovo status.

"I hope that Russia too will understand that we can work together on finding a solution to the status of Kosovo which will bring peace to Europe", Rice said.