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Fw: (AP) NATO to turn Afghan security control over by 2014

From: Moore, Anna W To: NEWS-Mahogany

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Subject: (AP) NATO to turn Afghan security control over by 2014

LISBON (AP) - NATO will start drawing down its troops in Afghanistan next July and its combat role in the war-torn nation will end by 2014 or earlier so security can be turned over to the Afghans, a top alliance official said November 19. "We think that goal is realistic, and we have made plans to achieve it, but of course if circumstances agree, it could be sooner, absolutely," said Mark Sedwill, NATO's top civilian representative in Afghanistan. Sedwill said the troop withdrawal starting next year will be "shallow" and eventually accelerate but did not elaborate. NATO spokesman James Appathurai also said the alliance's 28 leaders, including President Barack Obama, were set to approve the withdrawal plan. He said NATO is "quite confident of the end of 2014 timeline for handing responsibility to Afghan security forces" as requested by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Appathurai and Sedwill did not say how many NATO troops would stay in Afghanistan after 2014 serving as military advisers and trainers.