



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Afghan chief executive visits CENTCOM headquarters

MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. - Afghan Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah visited U.S. Central Command headquarters today, meeting with CENTCOM Commander Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III and Special Operations Command Commander Gen. Joseph L. Votel and speaking before an audience of CENTCOM and SOCOM headquarters personnel.

Dr. Abdullah thanked U.S. service members and their families for the many contributions as well as the sacrifices they have made on behalf of the people of Afghanistan and for the United States' continued support for his country. "As a result of the efforts of your people, we have an armed forces with more than 300,000 people." There was a time, he added, when having a national defense and security force of that magnitude was "just an idea."

"We are extremely grateful to CEO Abdullah Abdullah and his team for making the trip down to Tampa to visit CENTCOM and SOCOM and to express his sincere thanks to the many service members, civilians, and families who, over the past 13+ years, have contributed, alongside our Afghan brothers- and sisters-in-arms, to improving the country's security and stability," said Gen. Austin. "We have forged a strong bond, and in the coming months and years, we hope to pursue the many opportunities that we have built together in support of a brighter and more prosperous future for Afghanistan."

Dr. Abdullah and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani have been in the United States this week, meeting with U.S. senior leaders. Their activities have included meeting with President Barack Obama, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, and Secretary of State John Kerry. They also visited Arlington National Cemetery to participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

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