

TRANSLATION

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HEADLINE: **More recognition for Afghanistan mission.**

During his first troop visit to the Hindu Kush region, German President Christian Wulff strongly encouraged German soldiers and police officer in Afghanistan.

“German society should say thank-you and recognize what is being accomplished here”, Wulff said on Monday at the Bundeswehr camp in Masar-i-Sharif. According to polls, the majority of the Germans disapprove of the mission.

Subsequently, Wulff also visited with German soldiers in the unstable northern Afghan province of Kundus. At the camp's memorial, he remembered the fallen soldiers. Earlier, he had thanked the soldiers in Afghanistan for their mission and had asked for more support from society for their commitment.

In conclusion of his Afghanistan visit, Wulff looked back positively on his talks. “Afghanistan is on the right path but many little steps are necessary”. It is necessary to incorporate the neighboring countries which would profit from a stable Afghanistan. Again, Wulff thanked the German soldiers and aid workers in the country. “We are showing Afghanistan and the world that they can depend on Germany”. Wulff is expected to return to Berlin later in the evening.

Kundus and the neighboring province of Baghlan are some of the most dangerous regions in northern Afghanistan. Numerous Bundeswehr soldiers have been killed during attacks and fire fights in both provinces.

Approximately 5,000 German soldiers are stationed in Afghanistan at the moment. Withdrawal of troops is to begin at the end of this year. It is not clear yet how many soldiers will be withdrawn. Wulff was accompanied by Volker Wiekert, the Bundeswehr IG.

In Masar-i-Sharif, Wulff visited a police training camp. It is the goal of all military and civilian efforts “to enable the Afghan people to take matters in their own hands”, the German president said.

By the end of 2014, Afghan security forces are to take over responsibility for the country from NATO. Therefore, one of the most important tasks is the training of the military and police. Germany plays a major role in police training.

At ISAF's Regional Command North in Masar-i-Sharif, Wulff also met with US soldiers. “It is of the utmost importance to me to thank the Americans”, he said. “Many German soldiers have told me that they are only alive because American helicopters, under attack, have rescued them from battle situations”.