

U.S. Rep. Allen West, R-Plantation, is heading to Afghanistan.

The freshman congressman from Broward and Palm Beach counties will be traveling to Afghanistan June 24th-29th with other members of the House Armed Services Committee as part of a Congressional Delegation or CODEL.

West's office said the idea is to get first hand local and regional political, military and economic updates from United States and Afghan leaders on the ground as the planned July 1 drawdown of soldiers approaches.

It isn't West's first trip to Afghanistan. A retired lieutenant colonel who spent 22 years in the Army, he was a military contractor in Afghanistan from June 2005 to November 2007 training Afghan soldiers.

(My first conversation with West, when he was preparing to run for Congress in 2006, was via phone when he was serving in Afghanistan.)

It's also not West's first CODEL. He traveled to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in March.

West's office said the congressman met Monday with Marines from the 4th Air Naval Gunfire Liason Company in West Palm Beach to learn about their experiences serving in Afghanistan.

"Before I travel to Afghanistan, it is imperative that I talk with members of our Armed Forces and learn about their experiences," West said in a statement. "These brave warriors are on the ground fighting this fight, and no one knows better than they do, what the conditions are for this combat operation to be a success."

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