



NATO
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OTAN

Afghanistan



briefing

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NATO-led
ISAF



Ultimate
aim

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Working to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan

“Afghanistan is a top priority for NATO”

NATO is leading international efforts to provide security in Afghanistan, in what is the Alliance’s first mission beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

The groundbreaking decision to take strategic command and control of the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), since August 2003, demonstrates NATO’s resolve and ability to address new security challenges and take on new missions. The operation is clearly of

benefit to all involved: to Afghanistan and its people, the United Nations and the wider international community.

Initially limited to Kabul, ISAF has since been given a wider role to support the government of Afghanistan’s efforts to extend its authority beyond Kabul to

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“NATO’s enhanced role overcomes the problem of a continual search every six months for a new lead nation”



make the country safer, more peaceful and more stable.

ISAF was created by UN Security Council Resolution 1386 of 20 December 2001 to assist the recently formed Afghan Transitional Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas so that the Transitional Authority and UN personnel could operate in a secure environment. Troop-contributing nations were additionally called upon to help the Transitional Authority set up new Afghan security and armed forces. In effect, a three-way partnership was established between the Transitional Authority, ISAF and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to lead Afghanistan out of three decades of turmoil through a state-building process to a more peaceful and prosperous future.

NATO nations have at all times contributed more than 90 per cent of ISAF’s troops. The mission was initially led by the United Kingdom (ISAF I), then between June 2002 and January 2003 by Turkey (ISAF II) and between February and August 2003 jointly by Germany and the Netherlands (ISAF III). This sequential approach to commanding ISAF achieved impressive results on the

ground but was hampered by a lack of continuity. It put great pressure on lead nations who carried responsibility for ISAF’s strategic direction, planning and force generation as well as the provision of essential operational capabilities, such as intelligence and communications. And, since lead nations were only prepared to carry such responsibility for six-month periods, there was no let-up in the quest to identify new lead nations and with each change a new headquarters had to be established.

NATO first became involved in ISAF in response to a request from Germany and the Netherlands for support in the planning and execution of ISAF III. The Alliance’s assumption of the strategic command, control and coordination of the entire mission was, therefore, a logical continuation of this process. NATO’s enhanced role overcomes the problem of a continual search every six months for a new lead nation. Moreover, the creation of a permanent ISAF headquarters adds stability, increases continuity and enables smaller countries, which find it difficult to act as lead nations, to play a stronger role within a multinational structure. ■



NATO-led ISAF

NATO formally assumed a leadership role in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on 11 August 2003. The NATO-led ISAF uses the same banner and continues to operate according to current and future UN Security Council resolutions. On 13 October 2003, UN Security Council Resolution 1510 paved the way for ISAF to expand its mission beyond Kabul to help the government of Afghanistan in extending its authority to the rest of the country and in providing a safe and secure environment conducive to free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law and the reconstruction of the country. Afghan authorities and neighbouring countries have welcomed NATO's leadership of ISAF and are supportive of ISAF's wider role.

The North Atlantic Council (NAC), the Alliance's highest decision-making body, provides political direction to ISAF, in close consultation with non-NATO ISAF troop-contributing nations. To advance the political-military aspects of NATO's engagement in the country, NATO appointed Hikmet Cetin, a former Turkish foreign minister, as its Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan in January 2004. He provides advice to, and receives guidance from, the NAC and works in close coordination with the ISAF Commander, the Afghan authorities and the UNAMA as well as other bodies of the international community present in the country.

Strategic coordination, command and control is exercised by Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, which also hosts the ISAF international coordination cell to involve non-NATO participating nations. The Joint Force Command (JFC) in Brunssum, the Netherlands, acts as the operational-level headquarters between SHAPE and ISAF headquarters in Kabul. Through this "reach-back" capability, the ISAF Commander is able to draw on a vast pool of staff expertise and specialised assets in such areas as strategic planning without having to deploy them into Afghanistan.

JFC Brunssum also provides the core of the in-theatre headquarters for ISAF V (February-August 2004), including communications and logistics support. This core is augmented by the staff of the ISAF Commander, who is selected on a rotational basis from either a NATO Command or a troop contributing NATO nation. A Canadian general has been leading the command of ISAF since February 2004, when he relieved a German general who, as head of NATO's Joint Command Centre, had led ISAF IV for the first six-month period of NATO-led ISAF. Eurocorps – a rapid reaction corps headquarters made up of contributions from Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain – is due to take over in August 2004, once the Canadian lead role comes to an end.

NATO's decision to take command of ISAF demonstrates member states' resolve to meet new security challenges, in the wake of the terrorist attacks against the United States of 11 September 2001. It is a manifestation of the Alliance's transformation agenda, initially set out by NATO foreign ministers, meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, in May 2002, who decided that:

"NATO must be able to field forces that can move quickly to wherever they are needed, sustain operations over distance and time, and achieve their objectives." This seminal decision effectively paved the way for the Alliance to move beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, including to Afghanistan. The Alliance's Prague Summit of November 2002 put in place the programmes necessary to give the Alliance the capabilities required to take on new and potentially far-away missions.

Key tasks

As part of its task of contributing to a secure environment, ISAF routinely conducts joint patrols with the Kabul City Police and the Afghan National Army, projecting a positive image of teamwork and partnership. ISAF also supports security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process. This includes helping to train and develop the new Afghan National Army and the national police, as well as to demobilise former militia combatants. (By March 2004 some 7 000 soldiers had been trained and some 1 870 former combatants demobilised.) It also involves helping to collect heavy weapons and deposit them at special storage sites. The hand-over of weapons, which began last December, is a crucial step forward in enhancing stability: not only are the weapons no longer available to the various Afghan militia forces, but most of the weapons will eventually be used to equip the new Afghan National Army. ISAF also supports the Afghan forces in detaining suspected terrorists.

Another key task is to support the Afghan authorities in the overall operation of the Kabul Afghan International Airport, which is a vital lifeline into and out of Afghanistan because the country is very difficult to access by road. ISAF



AFGHANISTAN

Population: approx. 28 million (June 2003)

Area: 650,000 km²

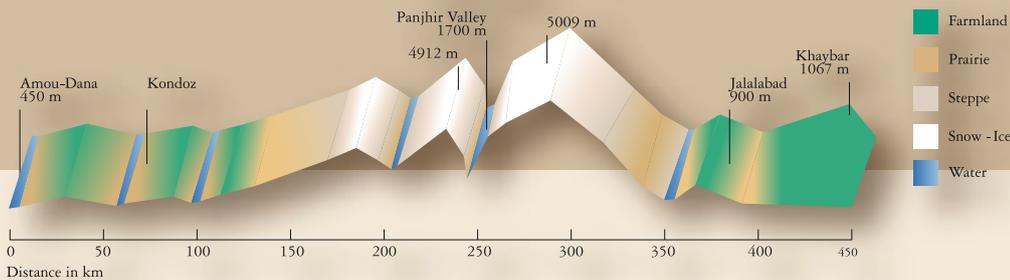
Land boundaries:

China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Ethnic groups:

Pashtun 44%, Tajik 25%, Hazara 10%, Minor ethnic groups (Aimaks, Turkmen, Baloch, and others) 13%, Uzbek 8%

Hindu Kuch



also conducts daily military flight and logistics operations at the airfield.

Throughout its area of operations, ISAF coordinates hundreds of civil-military projects which are providing for basic human needs, improving the quality of life and instilling a new sense of hope among the civilian population. These projects focus on improving local administration, infrastructure reconstruction, rehabilitation of schools and medical facilities, restoration of water and power supply, health, education, and agricultural technical assistance.

From December 2003 until early January 2004, ISAF successfully supported the conduct of the Constitutional *Loya Jirga*, which laid the ground for the creation of democratic institutions and will serve as the basis for reconstruction and national reconciliation. Agreement on the constitution has paved the way for elections planned for September 2004. While prime responsibility for overall security during the electoral process lies with the Afghan security forces, NATO has agreed to support them with an enhanced presence in northern Afghanistan.

Expanded mission

Following the expansion of ISAF's mandate to cover areas beyond Kabul, plans have been approved to extend ISAF's presence in the form of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), starting in the north and then spreading to the west of Afghanistan. PRTs are small teams of civilian and military personnel working in the provinces to help extend the authority of the central government and to provide a safer and more secure environment in which reconstruction can take place.

As a first step, NATO took over command of the previously German-led PRT in Kunduz on 6 January. The Kunduz PRT is serving as a pilot scheme for future ISAF-led PRTs. It is made up of a large civilian element, which works in close collaboration with but separately from the military component; only the military element is integrated in the ISAF chain of command. The PRT's activities focus on strengthening the authority of the central government, promoting the develop-

ment of administrative structures and the rule of law, strengthening democratic institutions, and implementing medium and long-term reconstruction plans. Its patrols are gradually fanning out beyond Kunduz to cover other areas.

ISAF plans to take control of five new PRTs by the time of NATO's summit meeting in Istanbul at the end of June 2004. The expansion of ISAF's operations also provides for temporary out-of-area deployments to carry out specific tasks such as helping to provide security for the electoral registration process and the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in September 2004, as well as tasks related to security-sector reform and disarmament and demobilisation.

As ISAF's operations expand, synergies will be sought between ISAF and the US-led Operation *Enduring Freedom*, which is active in tracking down and fighting remaining *Taliban* and *al-Qaeda* elements. In particular, there will be a need to ensure security for the new NATO-led PRTs, until NATO has developed its own operational capability in the country.



“Our own security
is closely linked
to the future of
Afghanistan”
Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

Ultimate aim

NATO's ultimate aim in Afghanistan is to help establish the conditions in which Afghanistan enjoys a representative government and self-sustaining peace and security.

Already significant progress is being made. “In the two years since the fall of the *Taliban*,” says Lieutenant General Rick Hillier of the Canadian Army, the second Commander of NATO-led ISAF, “a long-absent sense of security has returned to Kabul. The city is also experiencing a mini economic boom as refugees make their way home, markets are flourishing, and new constructions are springing up amid the ruins of the old town. A new constitution has been agreed that is now guiding the political development of the nation. And perhaps most significantly for the country's long-term prospects, more than five million boys and girls – the largest number of students ever in Afghanistan – returned to school in March 2004.”

Great challenges, nevertheless, remain. The terrorist threat to ISAF is a major source of concern. Moreover, persistent *Taliban* and *al-Qaida* activity in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan and factional in-fighting in the country's northern provinces undermine ISAF's mission by creating a climate of uncertainty. The drug trade, organised crime

and the poor state of local infrastructure remain longer-term challenges for Afghanistan and the international community working to rebuild the country.

While the task of rebuilding Afghanistan is primarily one for the Afghans themselves, NATO is helping create through ISAF the stability that is a prerequisite for successful reconstruction. And it is also in the interest of NATO's nations and the wider international community to support the stabilisation and reconstruction process. In the words of NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, speaking at the most recent international donor's conference in Berlin: “Afghanistan is a top priority for NATO. Our own security is closely linked to the future of Afghanistan as a stable, secure country where citizens can rebuild their lives after decades of war....If we want to win the war against terrorism we must first win the peace in Afghanistan... NATO will continue to play its part in that effort.”

For more information on ISAF, see www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/index.htm



ISAF International Security Assistance Force

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has a peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. It was created in accordance with the Bonn Conference of December 2001 at which Afghan opposition leaders gathered to begin the process of reconstructing their country. Its tasks are detailed in a Military Technical Agreement of January 2002 between the ISAF Commander and the Afghan Transitional Authority. These include assisting the Afghan Transitional Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas so that the Transitional Authority and UN personnel could operate in a secure environment.

ISAF also assists in developing reliable security structures; identifying reconstruction needs; and training and building up future Afghan security forces. Four UN Security Council Resolutions, 1386, 1413, 1444 and 1510, relate to ISAF, but it is not a UN force. Rather, it is a coalition of the willing deployed under the authority of the UN Security Council, supported and now led by NATO and financed by the troop-contributing nations. As of 27 April 2004, ISAF numbered some 6300 troops contributed by 36 countries, including all 26 NATO nations.



Afghanistan after the Taliban

In the wake of the ouster of the *Taliban*, Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries in the world as a result of more than two decades of fighting, repressive rule and the aftermath of war. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, more than two million Afghans are estimated to have been killed and many times that number wounded or maimed for life. Afghanistan is the most heavily mined country in the world with an estimated five to seven million land mines and 750,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance. According to the UN Development Programme, 70 per cent of Afghanistan's 22 million inhabitants are malnourished and life expectancy is 40. The World Bank estimates annual per capita GDP to be about \$200.

In December 2001, Afghan opposition leaders met in Bonn to set up a new government structure for their country, specifically the Afghan Transitional Authority. In June 2002 a national *Loya Jirga*, a grand council peculiar to Afghanistan, took place giving the Transitional Authority 18 months in which to hold a constitutional *Loya Jirga* to adopt a constitution and 24 months in which to hold national elections. The *Loya Jirga* took place from December 2003 to January 2004 and national elections are planned for September 2004. The international community pledged US\$ 4.7 billion for the first three years of reconstruction at a donors' conference in Tokyo in January 2002 to be administered by the World Bank. At a second donor's conference held in Berlin in March 2003, US\$ 8.2 billion were pledged for the next three years.

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