



briefing

OCTOBER 2003



NATO-led
ISAF



Ultimate
aim

Working to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan

NATO has assumed a leadership role in providing security in and around Kabul in Afghanistan, in what is the Alliance's first mission beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

"A milestone
in NATO's
development"

This groundbreaking operation demonstrates NATO's resolve and ability to address new security challenges and take on new missions and is clearly of benefit to all involved: to Afghanistan and its people, the United Nations and the wider international community, and the NATO nations and their Partners.

NATO formally took over the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a UN-mandated force tasked with helping provide security in and around Kabul, on 11 August 2003. According to ISAF's operational commander, General Sir Jack Deverell, this step was "a mile- ►



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



stone in NATO’s development representing a real break from the NATO of the past to an Alliance which is more relevant and has greater utility in the uncertain security environment of the future.”

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 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, then between June 2002 and January 2003 by Turkey and between February and August 2003 jointly by Germany and the Netherlands.

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.

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 is, 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. ■



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NATO-led ISAF

The NATO-led ISAF will continue to use the same banner and operate according to current and future UN resolutions. The current mandate limits ISAF operations to Kabul and the surrounding areas. Any extension of the ISAF mandate would require a UN Security Council resolution and, since NATO now exercises the leadership of ISAF, a decision by the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the Alliance’s highest decision-making body. To strengthen international support for the Transitional Authority, NATO has started considering whether and how ISAF’s mandate might be expanded.

The NAC will provide political direction to ISAF, in close consultation with non-NATO ISAF troop-contributing nations, following well-established practice derived from the experience of the Alliance’s peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, will assume the strategic responsibility of operation headquarters and host the ISAF international coordination cell, while Headquarters, Allied Forces North Europe (AFNORTH) in Brunssum, the Netherlands, will act as the operational-level Joint Force Command headquarters between SHAPE and ISAF headquarters in Kabul. NATO is providing a composite headquarters to form the permanent core of the ISAF headquarters. This draws

on AFNORTH’s subordinate commands and, in particular in the first instance, on the Joint Command Centre in Heidelberg, Germany, which has provided German Lieutenant-General Götz Gliemeroth to be the first NATO ISAF Force Commander.

More than 30 countries are contributing some 5,500 troops to ISAF. In addition, the ISAF Force Commander in Kabul has access to the vast pool of staff expertise available in Heidelberg, Brunssum and Mons. Through this “reach-back” capability, he will be able to draw on specialised assets in such areas as strategic planning without having to deploy them into Afghanistan. As a result, without requiring a larger force on the ground and with only a small NATO footprint in Kabul, ISAF



AFGHANISTAN

Population: approx. 28 million (June 2003)

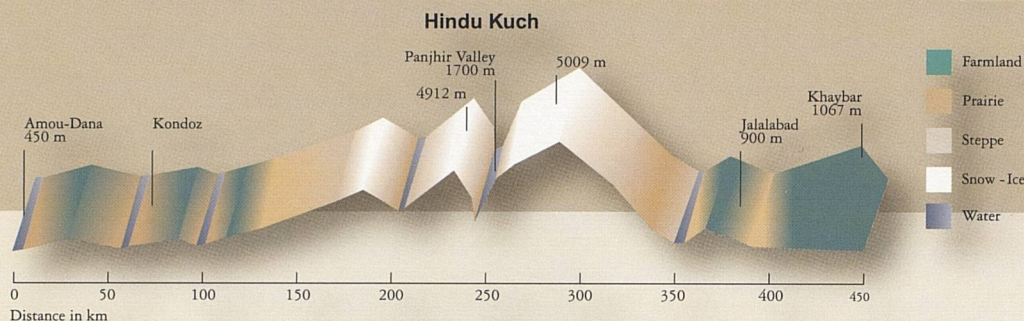
Area: 650,000 km²

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%



will have an enhanced capability to plan and conduct operations.

Although NATO has extensive peace-keeping experience on which to draw as a result of its operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia⁽¹⁾, taking command of ISAF represents a new departure for the Alliance. It is, however, a natural manifestation of the Alliance's transformation agenda and a demonstration of member states' resolve to meet new security challenges.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks against the United States of 11 September 2001, NATO invoked Article 5, its collective defence provision for the first

time in its history and embarked on a comprehensive reform process to ensure that the Alliance was as equipped to deal with the security threats of the 21st century as it had been in the last. At their Reykjavik meeting in May 2002, NATO foreign ministers 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.

"NATO must be able to field forces that can move quickly"

(1) Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.



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. ISAF has already contributed to the progressive development of national Afghan institutions, notably by helping train the first units of the new Afghan National Army and national police.

Lord Robertson:
“The sooner we're
not necessary in
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Now, ISAF and the Afghan National Army routinely conduct joint patrols in the streets of Kabul, projecting a positive image of teamwork and partnership. In addition, hundreds of civil-military projects involving ISAF are under way in the areas of local administration, infrastructure reconstruction, rehabilitation of schools and medical facilities, restoration of the water supply, health, education, and agricultural technical assistance, instilling a new sense of hope among the civilian population in and around Kabul.

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 can help create through ISAF the stability that is a pre-requisite for successful reconstruction. In the words of NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson: “NATO does not take on operations to fail. NATO has to succeed and we're determined to succeed. The sooner we're not necessary in Afghanistan, the better, but we are now part and parcel of the country's future.”

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. Three UN Security Council Resolutions, 1386, 1413 and 1444, 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.



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 specific to Afghanistan, took place giving the Transitional Authority 18 months in which to hold a national *Loya Jirga* to adopt a constitution and 24 months in which to hold national elections.

The *Loya Jirga* is scheduled for December 2003 and national elections for June 2004. The international community pledged \$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.

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