

NATO-Afghanistan relations



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani in Kabul, November 2018.

NATO is strongly committed to Afghanistan’s long-term security and stability. Its support to Afghanistan is focused on three main areas:

- the NATO-led Resolute Support mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces and institutions;
- funding of the Afghan security forces as part of a broader international effort;
- and the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership, which is being developed jointly with the Government of Afghanistan.

Resolute Support Mission

Resolute Support is a NATO-led, non-combat mission. It was launched on 1 January 2015, following the conclusion of the previous NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, and the assumption of full security responsibility by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF). The mission was established at the invitation of the Afghan government and in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2189 of 2014. Its purpose is to help the Afghan security forces and institutions develop the capacity to defend Afghanistan and protect its citizens in a sustainable manner. The Resolute Support Mission currently consists of around 10,000 troops from 36 NATO Allies and partners. It operates with one ‘hub’ (Kabul/Bagram) and four ‘spokes’ (Mazar-e-Sharif in the north, Herat in the west, Kandahar in the south, and Laghman in the east). It carries out training, advice and assistance activities in support of the Afghan government’s security roadmap (launched in 2017), which aims to increase the effectiveness and accountability of the Afghan national security forces and institutions. The roadmap focuses on leadership development, fighting capabilities (with an emphasis on the Afghan special operations forces and the air force), unity of command and fighting corruption.



General Austin S. Miller, Commander of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, at Resolute Support Headquarters in Kabul.

The mission also performs supporting functions in several areas. These include operational planning; budgetary development; force generation process; management and development of personnel; logistical sustainment; and civilian oversight in order to ensure the Afghan security forces and institutions act in accordance with the rule of law and good governance.

Our Resolute Support troops primarily work in security related ministries and with the army, air force, special operations, and police forces. The Commander of the mission has a degree of flexibility in the use of personnel and assets at his disposal. This ensures that training, advice and assistance are delivered most effectively and where they are most needed.

The legal framework for the Resolute Support Mission is provided by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which was signed in Kabul by the Afghan President and NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan and later ratified by the Afghan Parliament in late 2014. The SOFA defines the terms and conditions under which Allied and partner forces are deployed in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support Mission, as well as the activities that they are set to carry out under this agreement.

At the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018, leaders from NATO Allies and Resolute Support operational partners agreed to sustain the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission until conditions indicate a change is appropriate. This conditions-based approach has been reaffirmed at the NATO Leaders’ Meeting in London in December 2019, at the meeting of Defence Ministers of all NATO Allies and Resolute Support operational partners in February 2020 and at the meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in June and October 2020.

Following the issuing of a joint declaration between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the signature of an agreement between the United States and Taliban at the end of February 2020, NATO Allies and partners decided – in support to the peace process – to reduce their troop presence in Afghanistan. NATO Allies and partners will continue to consult on the future of the Resolute Support mission.



Training of Afghan Special Operations Forces.



Training of Afghan female police cadets.



Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and former President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai sign the Declaration on NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership at the NATO Summit in Lisbon, November 2010.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with Afghan security ministers, together with Chairman of NATO Military Committee Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart William Peach, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Curtis Michael Scaparrotti and General Austin S. Miller Commander of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Kabul, November 2018.

Financial support for the Afghan security forces

The responsibility for financial support of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces rests with the Afghan government. At the Chicago Summit in 2012, the Afghan authorities agreed to provide at least 500 million USD per year initially, with this contribution increasing steadily over time. At the same time, NATO and partner nations continue to play an important role in financially supporting the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. One of the main pillars of this effort is the NATO-run Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund, established in 2007.

The ANA Trust Fund is one of three funding streams used by the international community to channel its financial support to Afghanistan's security forces and institutions. The other two are the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the bilateral United States Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF). LOTFA is used to pay the salaries of police and correction personnel and to build the capacity of the Afghan Ministry of Interior and the police. Following a decision made at the NATO Summit in Chicago, the ANA Trust Fund has been adapted to make it more flexible, transparent, accountable and cost-effective.

At the Warsaw Summit on 8-9 July 2016, NATO Allies and Resolute Support Mission partners committed to providing financial support to the Afghan security forces, including until the end of 2020, as part of the broader effort by the international community. The Afghan authorities will continue to maintain and increase financial contributions to support their army and police forces. At the NATO Summit on 11-12 July 2018, in Brussels, Allies and partners confirmed their commitment to continue supporting financially the Afghan security forces through 2024. This commitment was reiterated at the NATO Leaders' Meeting in London in December 2019, at the meeting of Defence Ministers of all NATO Allies and Resolute Support operational partners in February 2020 and at the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers in June and October 2020. At the most recent plenary meeting of the ANA Trust Fund Board which took place in October 2020, donors confirmed pledges to the Fund for 2021 and confirmed their readiness to continue their funding support through 2024.

As of 8 March 2021, total contributions made to the Trust Fund since its establishment in 2007 amount to over 3.4 billion U.S. dollars. The ANA Trust Fund is open for contributions by the broader International Community.

NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership

The Enduring Partnership is NATO's political partnership with Afghanistan. It was set up in 2010 at the NATO Summit in Lisbon. At the 2016 Summit in Warsaw, Allies decided to strengthen and enhance the Partnership, within and alongside the Resolute Support Mission, through political dialogue and practical cooperation. The Enduring Partnership recognises the strategic importance of NATO's engagement in Afghanistan and underscores the commitment to global partnerships outlined in the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept. Within this framework, specific activities are being conducted, including workshops on defence education and on improvement of governance within the Afghan national defence structures. In the longer term, a traditional partnership with Afghanistan remains NATO's goal. NATO and its partners remain committed to Afghanistan and its people as they continue to support Afghan-led efforts towards a secure and stable future, together with the broader International Community.

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