

Transition to Afghan lead: *Inteqal*



Inteqal - the Dari and Pashtu word for *Transition* – is the process by which security responsibility for Afghanistan is gradually transitioned from ISAF to Afghan leadership.

At the Kabul Conference in July 2010, President Karzai publicly expressed his ambition to see the Afghan National Security Forces take the lead in conducting security operations across Afghanistan by the end of 2014, an Afghan ambition which NATO applauds and fully supports. NATO, as part of the overall International Community effort, is working with Afghanistan to create the security conditions and capacity whereby the Government of Afghanistan is able to exercise its authority throughout the country.

At the Lisbon Summit in November 2010, Heads of State and Government recognised the progress in Afghanistan that has enabled this evolution towards irreversible transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership, beginning in early 2011, following a joint Afghan and NATO/ISAF assessment and decision.

Successful transition of security responsibility requires that Afghan Security Forces, under effective Afghan civilian control, will be capable of tackling security challenges on a sustainable and irreversible basis – albeit with some level of continued support from NATO. Afghan and NATO authorities have been assessing the readiness of areas for transition through the Joint Afghan-NATO *Inteqal* Board (JANIB), which made its first set of conclusions and recommendations on 24 February. Transition is a conditions-based process, not a calendar driven event and the recommendations of the JANIB are based on an assessment of conditions on the ground.

At their meeting in Brussels on 11 March 2011, NATO and ISAF Defence Ministers endorsed the recommendations contained in the 24 February JANIB report. In doing so, Ministers have decided to move to Phase 4, or the Transition Phase, of the ISAF operation, in specific geographical areas recommended by the Board. The areas not yet identified to start transition immediately will remain in Phase 3, the Stabilisation Phase, of the ISAF operation.

This step confirms the readiness of ISAF to support transition implementation which will commence only once the decision has been approved by the Afghan Government and announced by President Karzai.

The areas announced by President Karzai will then go through an implementation phase to the point where ANSF are capable of dealing with remaining security threats independently. This could take between 12 and 18 months for each transitioning area, depending on the conditions on the ground. This process will be repeated until the transition process has been fully implemented. By the end of 2014, we expect the ANSF to lead and conduct security operations in all provinces.

Ministers also discussed and agreed the principles by which the decision will be implemented, in line with the declaration made by ISAF Heads of State and Government at the Lisbon summit last November. These include:

- Ensuring better alignment of our assistance with Afghan national priority programmes
- Working through increasingly capable Afghan institutions
- Adjusting our profile and configuration as implementation proceeds by reinvesting some of the transition dividend, where appropriate, to meet critical security, training and mentoring needs
- Further strengthening Afghan security capabilities as ISAF moves gradually away from combat to an increasingly supporting role
- Supporting the evolution of the international civilian effort, including that of the ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams, to enable greater Afghan capacity and leadership.

Transition does not signify ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan but a gradual shift to a genuine supporting role as Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) capabilities develop.

Criteria for Transition of a particular area:

- ANSF are capable of shouldering additional security tasks with less assistance from ISAF
- Security is at a level that allows the population to pursue routine daily activities
- Local governance is sufficiently developed so that security will not be undermined as ISAF assistance is reduced
- ISAF is postured properly to thin out as ANSF capabilities increase and threat levels diminish

Transition assessments will also consider the ability and authority of the Afghan Government to provide the rule of law and manage public administration at sub-national and local levels; and the capacity of an area to sustain socio-economic development.

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