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NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance

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Summary

The mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan is seen as a test of the alliance's political will and military capabilities. The allies are seeking to create a "new" NATO, able to go beyond the European theater and combat new threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Afghanistan is NATO's first "out-of-area" mission beyond Europe. The purpose of the mission is the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. The mission is a difficult one because it must take place while combat operations against Taliban insurgents continue.

U.N. Security Council resolutions govern NATO's responsibilities. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) faces formidable obstacles: shoring up a weak government in Kabul; using military capabilities in a distant country with rugged terrain; and rebuilding a country devastated by war and troubled by a resilient narcotics trade. NATO's mission statement lays out the essential elements of the task of stabilizing and rebuilding the country: train the Afghan army, police, and judiciary; support the government in counter-narcotics efforts; develop a market infrastructure; and suppress the Taliban.

Although the allies agree on ISAF's mission, they differ on how to accomplish it. Some allies do not want their forces to engage in combat operations. None wants to engage directly in destruction of poppy fields in countering the drug trade; how to support the Afghan government in this task — largely through training the police — is proving to be a difficult undertaking. In the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal and criticism of U.S. practices at Guantanamo, the allies are insisting on close observation of international law in dealing with prisoners taken in Afghanistan.

ISAF has proceeded in stages to stabilize the country. In Stage One, ISAF took control of Kabul and northern Afghanistan. In Stage Two, ISAF moved into western Afghanistan. Stage Three, in the still restive south, began in July 2006. Stage Four began in October 2006, and ISAF now covers the entire country. ISAF's principal mechanism for rebuilding Afghanistan is the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). PRTs, composed of military and civilian officials, are charged with extending the reach of the Afghan government by improving governance and rebuilding the economy. There are significant differences in how individual NATO governments run their PRTs.

Most observers predict that ISAF's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan will require five years or more. An exit strategy has multiple components: suppressing the Taliban; rebuilding the economy; and cajoling Afghan leaders to put aside tribal and regional disputes and improve governance. U.S. leadership of the alliance as well as NATO credibility are at issue. The allies are sharply critical of aspects of the Bush Administration's foreign policy, and sometimes specifically its NATO policy. U.S. leadership in Afghanistan may well affect NATO's cohesiveness and its future. This report will be updated as needed. See also CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

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Introduction

NATO's mission in Afghanistan is seen as a test of the allies' military capabilities and their political will to undertake a complex mission. Since September 11, 2001, the allies have sought to create a "new" NATO, able to go beyond the European theater and combat new threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). NATO is seeking to be "global" in its geographic reach and in the development of non-member partner states that assist in achieving an agreed mission. This change in overall mission reflects a NATO consensus that the principal dangers to allied security lie distant from the treaty area and require new political tools and military capabilities to combat them.

Two military operations in Afghanistan seek to stabilize the country. *Operation Enduring Freedom* (OEF) is a combat operation led by the United States against Al Qaeda remnants, primarily in the eastern and southern parts of the country along the Pakistan border. OEF is not a NATO operation, although many coalition partners are NATO members. Approximately 9,000 troops are in OEF, including 7,000 U.S. forces.[1] The second operation is the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), established by the international community in 2002 to stabilize the country. NATO assumed control of ISAF the following year. By July 2007, ISAF had an estimated 39,000 troops from 37 countries, with NATO members providing the core of the force. The United States has 15,000 to 17,000 troops in ISAF. Since August 2003, 644 ISAF troops have lost their lives in Afghanistan.

NATO's effort in Afghanistan is the alliance's first "out-of-area" mission beyond Europe. The purpose of the mission is the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Although NATO has undertaken stabilization and reconstruction missions before, for example in Kosovo, the scope of the undertaking in Afghanistan is considerably more difficult. Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants are resisting the operation, Afghanistan has never had a well-functioning central government, and the distance from Europe and the country's terrain present daunting obstacles. Reconstruction must therefore take place while combat operations, albeit often low-level, continue. And although the allies agree upon a general political objective, some have differing interpretations how to achieve it.

The mission in Afghanistan is likely to be important for NATO's future, and for U.S. leadership of the alliance. The European allies insisted that a U.N. resolution

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[1] For details of the military operations in Afghanistan, see CRS Report RL33503, *U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan*, by Andrew Feickert.

govern NATO's mission to give legitimacy to the insertion of allied troops in Afghanistan. This important political requirement was achieved. In the past several years, NATO governments have also repeatedly pledged to develop capabilities making their forces more expeditionary and "deployable." The mission in Afghanistan provides a hard test of these capabilities. Several key NATO members, above all the United States, have insisted that the allies must generate the political will to counter the greatest threats to their security. Again, Afghanistan provides a test of will against the concrete danger of international terrorism.

NATO's mission in Afghanistan also tests U.S. leadership of the alliance. Some allies question whether the United States will distance itself from inhumane practices reportedly used in U.S. military-run prisons; and whether the U.S. commitment to the interests of the allies preserves the mutual sense of obligation that once more clearly characterized the alliance. The allies also believe that the United States, as a global power, must provide leadership and resources to counter the destabilizing influences upon Afghanistan of two neighboring states, Iran and Pakistan.

A highly respected German Marshall Fund poll has found a sharp decline in European public opinion towards U.S. leadership since 2002. In key European countries, the desirability of U.S. leadership in the world has fallen from 64% in 2002 to 36% in June 2007; the approval rating of President Bush in these same countries has fallen from 38% in 2002 to 17% in 2007. U.S. policy in the Iraq war is the principal cause of this decline.[2] This decline is complicating the effort of allied governments to sustain support for the ISAF mission.

Afghanistan presents a growing challenge to NATO. Over the past two years, Taliban attacks have increased in scope and number, and Taliban fighters are adopting some of the tactics, such as roadside bombs, used by insurgents in Iraq. The Karzai government in Afghanistan is coming under international criticism, and its public support has diminished, due to corruption and an inability to improve living conditions. Some warlords continue to exert influence, and the narcotics industry remains an entrenched threat to the country's political health.[3] The allies are not in full agreement how to counter these problems, but allied officials say that they need a strong and reliable Afghan government to provide reasonable services and competence to the population if NATO is to succeed.

This report follows the path of NATO's evolution in Afghanistan. The first section covers the initial two stages of ISAF's mission, and analyzes key issues in the mission: use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams to stabilize and rebuild the country; overcoming caveats placed by individual allies on the use of their forces; and managing the counter-narcotics effort. The next section of the report examines the debate to develop a refined mission statement and a new organizational structure for Stage Three by analyzing issues that are both political and military, such as securing more troops, the treatment of prisoners, and organization of command; it covers roughly the period December 2005-fall 2006. By spring 2006, the allies began

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[2] *Transatlantic Trends*, German Marshall Fund, September 2007, p. 5-7.

[3] For an overview and analysis of key issues in Afghanistan, see CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

to realize that Stage Three would require a greater combat capability than originally believed, and the mission began to change. This adjustment in mission is the subject of the next section of the report, which discusses Stage Three and overall ISAF operations beginning in July 2006 through the perspective of several key allies. The next section discusses Stage Four, in which ISAF has assumed control of the entire country. The final section of the report assesses ISAF's progress to date.

Evolution of NATO in Afghanistan: Stages One and Two

Purpose of the Mission

The United Nations, at the request of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, has asked for NATO's presence, supported by Security Council resolutions. The Security Council passed the currently governing resolution, S/RES 1623, unanimously on September 13, 2005, to be in force until mid-October 2006, when it must be renewed. The resolution calls upon NATO to disarm militias, reform the justice system, train a national police force and army, provide security for elections, and combat the narcotics industry.[4] The resolution does not provide details of how NATO should accomplish these tasks; rather, the allies among themselves, in consultation with the Afghan government, have refined the resolution's provisions into active policy.

NATO involvement began in Afghanistan under a U.N. mandate in August 2003. Some non-NATO states, such as Australia and New Zealand, contribute resources to the allied effort. Over time, the alliance has laid out four stages to bring most of Afghanistan under NATO control. NATO leaders have faced considerable difficulty in persuading allies to contribute forces to ISAF.

In Stage One in 2003-2004 NATO moved into the northern part of the country; French and German forces predominate in these areas. Stage Two began in May 2005, when NATO moved into western Afghanistan; Italian and Spanish forces are the core of the NATO force there. These sections of the country are relatively stable. Stage Three began in July 2006 when ISAF moved into southern Afghanistan, where U.S., British, Canadian, and Dutch forces predominate. Stage Four began in October 2006, when ISAF took control of the entire country. The U.S.-led OEF will simultaneously continue its combat operations in border regions still under threat.

National Caveats

Some allies commit forces to a NATO operation, then impose restrictions — "national caveats" — on tasks those forces may undertake. These restrictions, for example, may prohibit forces from engaging in combat operations or from patrolling at night due to a lack of night-vision equipment.[5] In addition to caveats, some governments do not permit their forces to be transferred to other parts of

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[4] UNSC 8495, September 13, 2005.

[5] Interviews of NATO officials, February 2006.

Afghanistan. Caveats pose difficult problems for force commanders, who seek maximum flexibility in utilizing troops under their command. NATO must accept troops from governments and shape the mission to fit the capabilities of and caveats on those troops. NATO commanders have sought to minimize the number of caveats on forces dedicated to ISAF, an effort that has met with mixed success.

At the NATO summit in Riga, Latvia, in November 2006, allied leaders sought to reduce the caveats in Afghanistan. The United States, Canada, Britain, and the Netherlands have forces in southern and eastern Afghanistan, highly unsettled areas, and have appealed to other governments to release combat forces to assist them in moments of danger. The French government reduced its caveats and agreed to allow its forces in Kabul and elsewhere come to the assistance of other NATO forces in an emergency. Germany also allowed its forces to respond in an emergency. Turkey, in contrast, refused to change its proscription against its forces' use in combat. The Italian and Spanish governments said that their force commanders in the field could make the decision to send forces to assist in an urgent situation. It remains unclear whether and when these commanders would have to request permission from their capitals to do so, a complicating factor that could delay a decision.

Some allies have singled out Germany for special criticism, given that Germany has a large contingent of 2,700 troops in a relatively quiet area of northern Afghanistan. German troops reportedly patrol only in armored personnel carriers, and do not leave their bases at night.[6]

Provincial Reconstruction Teams

NATO officials describe Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) as the "leading edge" of the allies' effort to stabilize Afghanistan. Some allied governments believe that poor governance, rather than an insurgency, is the principal problem impeding stabilization of the country. NATO's assistance to the Afghan government in controlling the narcotics trade, disarming militias, reducing corruption, and building an economic infrastructure is the essence of the effort to bring stability to the country.[7] The purpose of the PRTs is to extend the authority of the central government into the countryside, provide security, and undertake projects (such as infrastructure development) to boost the Afghan economy. U.S. PRTs are composed of soldiers, civil affairs officers, representatives of the U.S. and other government agencies focused on reconstruction, and Afghan government personnel.

NATO now controls 24 PRTs. U.S. officials say that they would like to see more NATO and OEF PRTs created in 2007.

There is no established model for PRTs, and they receive mixed reviews. By most accounts, those serving in U.S. PRTs make an effort to move about surrounding

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[6] Interviews at the NATO Defense College, Rome, December 2006, and Washington, DC, April-May 2007; "Germans wavering on Afghan mission," *International Herald Tribune*, August 20, 2007, p. 3.

[7] Statement of Nancy Powell (Dept. of State), House Armed Services Committee hearing, June 22, 2005; interviews with European officials, November 2005- July 2006.

territory, engage the local governments and citizens, and demonstrate that the U.S. presence is bringing tangible results. The United States government controls the funds for its PRTs, in part to ensure that the money does not disappear through the hands of corrupt officials in the provinces or in Kabul, and that it goes directly to designated projects. U.S. PRTs also have the military capacity to respond to any situation in which their personnel are endangered. While not overtly offensive military instruments, U.S. PRTs are directed to provide security and respond aggressively to any threat.[8]

By most accounts, ISAF PRTs differ considerably from those of the United States. While their mission is the same, their resources and activities are not. ISAF PRTs generally have fewer personnel. Some U.S. officials believe that most European-led PRTs are too hesitant in their engagement of the Afghan population. Some European-led PRTs are minimally funded, or provide little supervision of how their funds are managed and dispensed.[9] Individual European government perspectives on PRTs will be more fully discussed in another section that will illustrate the range of allied thinking on the principal issues confronting ISAF.

Counter-Narcotics

The allies are struggling to combat Afghanistan's poppy crop. Afghanistan supplies 93% of the world's opium as of 2007. The crop is a major factor in the economic life and stability of the country, and by one estimate accounts for 40% of Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP).[10] Opium poppy farmers are heavily concentrated in the southern part of the country.

The repercussions of Afghanistan's poppy crop for the future of the country and for ISAF operations are extensive and complex. The Afghan government lacks the law enforcement apparatus, including a well-functioning judicial system, to combat the narcotics trade successfully. Narcotics traffickers can exploit the country's primitive transportation network, as an extensive road system is not needed to move opium to market; a small load of opium can yield a high financial return.

The opium trade has a corrosive effect on Afghan society. Former CIA Director John Negroponte told Congress in January 2007 that "the drug trade contributes to endemic corruption at all levels of government and undercuts public confidence. A dangerous nexus exists between drugs and insurgents and warlords who derive funds from cultivation and trafficking." At the same time, farmers in parts of the country view the poppy as their only source of income. Eradication of the industry without

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[8] "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan - An Interagency Assessment," Dept. of Defense, Washington, DC, April 26, 2006; Interviews of U.S. officials, 2006-2007.

[9] Interviews of U.S. officials, 2005-2007.

[10] See CRS Report RL32686, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher Blanchard; Pankaj Mishra, "The Real Afghanistan," *New York Review of Books*, March 10, 2005, p. 44-48; "L'Afghanistan a fourni 87% de l' opium mondial en 2004," *Le Monde*, July 1, 2005, p. 6; House Armed Services Committee, hearing on "Security and Stability in Afghanistan," June 28, 2006; "Afghan opium trade hits new peak," *Washington Post*, August 28, 2007, p. A7.

a substitute source of income would throw these farmers into destitution, and they violently resist any effort to destroy their crops. The allies provide training, intelligence, and logistics to Afghan army units and police who destroy opium labs.[11] One former regional commander believes that the Afghan government's destruction of poppy fields is too random to be effective, and that the government does not take decisive action to end warlord involvement in the narcotics trade.[12] The Bush Administration has urged the Karzai government to consider spraying herbicide on the poppy fields; the Afghan government is considering this proposal, and studying the possible effects of herbicide on public health and the environment.

Some western officials in Afghanistan note that the country has very few well-educated individuals able to serve in the judiciary and in other professions. In the view of most observers, the entire judicial system is greatly deficient. The police remain corrupt and distrusted by the population. They lack extensive training and experience, as well as transport, an issue that will be discussed below in the section on Stage Three operations. The court system remains in its infancy, with few capable jurists and attorneys.[13] The Italian government leads the effort to build a professional judicial system. In July 2007, Italy held a conference in Rome to develop a strategy to build such a system. Governments in attendance pledged $360 million to the effort over a period of several years; they linked the pledges to specific programs. Among the principles and steps that the programs will seek to establish are: a code of conduct, transparency, and accountability for officials in the judicial system; and equipment, salary support, qualification requirements, and an educational system for those interested in the legal profession. A follow-up meeting will be held in Kabul in October 2007 to begin implementation of these programs.[14]

Another component of the counter-narcotics effort is to persuade farmers to switch to alternative crops. Such crops cannot compete with poppies; income from a hectare of poppies can reach $4600 a year, while wheat, one of the suggested substitute crops, can bring only $390. Orchards might bring more money, but they require years to develop. A more extensive market infrastructure is necessary as well. U.S. officials believe that an extensive road-building effort is imperative to modernize the country's economy.

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[11] Testimony of Director Negroponte, "Annual Threat Assessment," Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 11, 2007; House International Relations Committee, hearing on "U.S. Counternarcotics Policy in Afghanistan," March 17, 2005; Mishra, *op. cit*, p. 46.

[12] Interview, June 2007.

[13] Interviews with European Union officials, 2006-2007; presentation of former Afghan Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani, Brookings Institution, April 30, 2007; and "McCaffrey Sees 2007 as a Crucial Year," *Washington Post*, April 10, 2007, p. A15.

[14] "Rome Conference on Justice and Rule of Law in Afghanistan," Rome, July 2-3, 2007; interviews of Italian officials, August 2007. The United States pledged $15 million for the program, and Italy pledged approximately $13.5 million.

Stage Three: Establishing Mission and Structure

ISAF's task in Stage Three is to bring stability to the southern part of the country, where the writ of the Karzai government is limited. Initially, in late 2005, the allies believed that Stage Three would emulate Stages One and Two by seeing a replacement of OEF forces by NATO forces in a stabilizing environment. The allies nonetheless knew that there would be several significant new challenges in Stage Three. The Taliban originated in the south, in Qandahar province, and they retain their most active network there. Poppy farming is widespread in the south, particularly in Helmand province, where British troops operate, and in Uruzgan province, where Dutch troops predominate.

Stage Three came into force on July 31, 2006, after having been postponed several times due to violence and an effort to secure pledges of troops from allied governments. Elements of ISAF had been present in the region for several months, preparing for their mission. Several non-allies, such as Australia and New Zealand, are contributing modest amounts of troops, money, and expertise to ISAF, a sign of the importance of the mission in South Asia and to the allies' effort to build a "global NATO" of members and partner states.

The allies confronted four issues in attempting to develop a coherent force for Stage Three: writing a mission statement; raising troops to accomplish that mission; agreeing upon treatment of prisoners; and creating a command structure.

Mission Statement

From fall 2005 through early 2006 the Bush Administration wished to merge the functions and command of ISAF and OEF. Then Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld asked the allies to assume counter-insurgency and anti-terror responsibilities in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. Some allies balked, contending that such combat operations were OEF's task, that the U.N. resolution governing ISAF called for a stabilization operation only, and that, in some cases, the allies did not have forces available for the counter-insurgency and counter-terror tasks.[15]

In December 2005 the allies announced a mission statement for ISAF's Stage Three in the form of a communiqué. They pledged to work to extend the authority of the Afghan government, primarily through development of PRTs. They also committed themselves to training the Afghan army and police, an effort in state-building meant to provide a Kabul government with reliable security forces, a formidable task because such forces were barely in existence. They further committed themselves to "supporting Afghan government counter-narcotics efforts."[16] They also agreed upon guidelines for dealing with prisoners.

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[15] "Europeans Balking at New Afghan Role," *New York Times*, September 14, 2005, p. 1; interviews of European officials, September 2005 - February 2006.

[16] "Final Communiqué," North Atlantic Council, NATO, Brussels, December 8, 2005.

The mission statement reflected European and Canadian views that Stage Three operations should concentrate on reconstruction and stabilization, with initial concern over military threat at a minimum. The Taliban were relatively quiet when the allies wrote their communiqué, perhaps due to the winter weather in Afghanistan, perhaps because the Taliban were organizing and seeking to gather their strength. In April 2006, then British Defense Secretary said that he hoped that his country's forces could deploy "without firing a shot."[17] Peter Struck, Defense Minister under the previous German government, said in September 2005 that "NATO is not equipped for counter-terrorism operations. That is not what it is supposed to do."[18] The Dutch parliament held a contentious debate in February 2006 over whether to send forces to ISAF. Some government and opposition members of Parliament opposed sending Dutch forces for a combat operation; their view was clear that Dutch forces were primarily to support a stabilization mission.[19]

By spring 2006 events on the ground in Afghanistan imposed new exigencies on ISAF's mission. An attack on the Norwegian-Finnish PRT in normally tranquil Meymaneh, in western Afghanistan, in February 2006 had given an indication of an emerging problem: the need for a rapid military response capability for rescue operations. When the PRT was attacked, no NATO combat forces were in the region to protect the ISAF personnel. Other NATO forces that were nearby had caveats prohibiting their use in combat operations. Eventually a British plane and forces were found to end the attack on the PRT. Before and after the attack on the PRT, then NATO SACEUR General James Jones called upon the NATO governments to pledge forces to ISAF that would be capable of combat operations. He waged a constant campaign to cajole allied governments not to place caveats on their forces that ruled out combat operations.[20]

NATO governments ultimately agreed to adjust how ISAF would fulfil Stage Three. They wrote more "robust" rules of engagement, which have not been made fully public. By May 2006, British General David Richards, then the ISAF commander, was describing Stage Three as a "combat operation." He added that caveats affecting Stage Three forces had been "reduced." He dismissed the tendency of some NATO governments to draw a line between OEF's counter-terror operations and the supposedly low-level counter-insurgency responsibilities that had crept into Stage Three responsibilities. He told visiting members of a NATO parliamentary delegation that counter-terror and counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan were not always distinguishable.[21] When OEF turned southern Afghanistan over to ISAF

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[17] "UK Warned of More Afghanistan Deaths," *Financial Times*, July 3, 2006, p. 3.

[18] "Europeans Balking at New Afghan Role," *op. cit.* Struck's view seems to be contradicted by the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept, the alliance's guiding political document, which clearly states that counter-terrorism is one of NATO's new post-Cold War tasks.

[19] "Peacekeeping in Afghanistan Is Modern Crisis Management," in *European Affairs*, spring/summer 2006, p. 3-4.

[20] Comments by Gen. Jones at NATO Parliamentary Assembly meetings in Copenhagen, November 2005.

[21] "Visit to Afghanistan," report by the Defence Committee of the NATO Parliamentary (continued...)

on July 31, some OEF forces remained in the region to continue combat operations targeted against terrorist elements.

Difficulties in Raising Troops

The debate over mission affected the effort to raise forces for Stage Three. From 2005, NATO officials have experienced difficulty persuading member governments to supply forces. According to NATO officials, the attack on the Norwegian-Finnish PRT awakened some governments to the continuing threat posed by instability and the insurgency.[22] Rapid-response forces suddenly became available. Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands pledged forces for Stage Three.

Britain initially promised to send 3600 troops to Helmand province by the beginning of Stage Three operations in July 2006, and has steadily increased its contribution to 5,800 troops. Canada was one of the first allies to recognize the need for combat forces. By a close vote in the Canadian parliament in May 2006, the government designated 2300 troops for Afghanistan until February 2009, most of which have been sent to Qandahar province.

The debate in the Dutch parliament over assigning troops to ISAF was also contentious. The Dutch population initially opposed sending forces into a combat operation. Ultimately, the Netherlands designated 1,400 to 1,700 troops for duty in ISAF's Stage Three and Stage Four operations.

The views of the British, Canadian, and Dutch governments will be discussed more extensively later in this report.

Disagreements over Treatment of Prisoners

There was a contentious debate among the allies over the December 2005 final communiqué guiding NATO operations in Afghanistan. Most of the allies were critical of U.S. abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq; they extended this criticism to the U.S. detention policy at Guantanamo Bay, where some prisoners captured in Afghanistan have been sent since 2001. These allies contended that the Bush Administration was ignoring the Geneva Convention governing treatment of prisoners taken in combat, and that the issue was a significant one among their publics and in their domestic political debates.[23]

These allies insisted that the communiqué explicitly address the issue of treatment of prisoners. The final document contains the statement: "In addition to NATO's agreed detention policy for ISAF, which is and remains consistent with

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[21] (...continued)
Assembly, May 23, 2006, p. 2.

[22] Interviews with NATO officials, February 2006.

[23] Interviews with officials from NATO governments, December 2005-February 2006; "En Afghanistan, l'OTAN évolue de la pacification vers le contre-terrorisme," *Le Monde*, November 20-21, 2005, p. 4.

international law, we welcome initiatives by Allies to assist the Afghan authorities in the implementation of international standards for the detention of prisoners."[24]

The allies also agreed that prisoners taken by ISAF should be turned over to the Afghan government. Some allied governments reportedly told the Afghan government that they did not wish such prisoners to then be transferred to the United States government. The Afghan government reportedly insisted upon its sovereign right to determine the disposition of prisoners in its custody. A new problem, discussed below, has arisen over allegations that Afghan officials have tortured detainees turned over to them by ISAF forces.[25]

Command Structure: Coordinating ISAF and OEF Operations

NATO's discussion over the command structure for Stages Three and Four in Afghanistan reflected the U.S. desire to see the allies more fully embrace combat tasks. Reluctance on the part of some European governments to clash with the Taliban and warlords was evident in these discussions.

From at least 2004, the Bush Administration began to urge the allies to assume more responsibilities in the fight against insurgents and terrorists in Afghanistan. By 2005 the Administration was urging that ISAF and OEF be merged under one command. Many allies at first resisted the call to merge the two commands, largely because of the different nature of the two operations and differing national agendas.

Britain, Germany, and France were the principal allies opposing the U.S. idea to merge the commands. They did so for differing reasons. Britain and Germany wished to preserve ISAF as a stabilization, and not combat, mission. Britain, leading the ISAF anti-narcotics effort, wished to ensure that that initiative remained in the political sphere; along with other allies, the British believe that using force against Afghan farmers to eradicate the poppy crop might result in a broadened insurgency. Germany opposed a merger of the commands because German forces in ISAF were trained only for stabilization, and not for counter-insurgency operations.

The French view was somewhat different. The French government was close to the Administration view that some combat operations against the Taliban and other elements would be necessary. At the same time, France was concerned that the Administration, after having a U.S. commander in place to guide all military activity in Afghanistan, might use NATO as a "toolbox" to accomplish Washington's broader objectives. Specifically, Paris was concerned that the Administration would designate more U.S. units from Afghanistan to be sent to Iraq, and leave the allies to stabilize Afghanistan. Administration officials insist publicly and privately that they have no intention of sharply reducing forces in Afghanistan.[26] In fact, the Bush Administration has increased the number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

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[24] "Final Communiqué," North Atlantic Council Ministerial meeting, December 8, 2005.

[25] Interviews with officials from NATO governments, 2005-2007.

[26] Interviews with officials from allied governments, December 2005-October 2007.

In resolving the issue of command structure, the allies sought to address practical problems for the two operations. ISAF and OEF operate in contiguous areas, but there is no clear dividing line between regions where the Taliban and Al Qaeda are active, and the relatively stable regions of the country. A weakness of ISAF had been deficient capability for rapid response rescue, should soldiers and civilian personnel find themselves under fire.

The allies agreed upon a "synergy," rather than a merger, of the two commands to solve this problem. The ISAF commander now has three deputies. One deputy leads the stabilization operations, working closely with the Afghan government to identify priorities in reconstruction and governance. The Italians, for example, are leading the effort to build and professionalize an Afghan judiciary. A second deputy commands air operations, as the hurdles for successful strategic and tactical lift and search and rescue are formidable.

A third deputy directs security operations. This deputy answers to both the OEF and ISAF commanders. The purpose of the security commander's dual role is to provide coordination between the two operations. For example, if troops in one operation need air cover or an emergency response, then those resources could come from either OEF or ISAF, depending on which was nearest to the action and had available resources. This arrangement was in fact already in place with some allied governments before Stage Three began. French air combat forces operating out of Tajikistan, for example, have been providing this function to troops in the field in both ISAF and OEF since 2005, and other allies' air components are now prepared to do the same. In addition, French and Dutch officials say that their air force components serve both commands by gathering and sharing military intelligence.[27]

Stage Three Operations: Allied Viewpoints

Once the allies agreed on ISAF's mission for Stage Three, they began to differ on how to accomplish it. The previous section analyzed allied views in establishing the mission and structure of Stage Three. This section discusses the developing views of allies as Stage Three moves forward. Allied views began to change between the time of the December 2005 NATO communiqué describing ISAF's mission and July 2006, largely due to the surge in Taliban activity. For purposes of analysis, the range of views begins with governments most hesitant about the use of combat forces in Afghanistan and proceeds through a list of governments that believe that a more forceful military hand will be necessary to stabilize and rebuild the country.

Germany: Rebuild but Avoid Combat

Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government had initially expressed a more decisive commitment to securing stability in Afghanistan than its predecessor. Germany now has 3,300 forces in ISAF trained for stability operations but not for combat in the northern part of the country. In September 2006, the German parliament extended the commitment for German troops, but only gave permission

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[27] Interviews of officials in allied governments, November 2005-July 2006.

to send them to relatively secure northern Afghanistan.[28] At NATO's Riga summit, however, Germany agreed to send troops to assist allied forces in an emergency. In spring 2007, the German government assigned six Tornado aircraft to Afghanistan for use in surveillance operations. In October 2007 the *Bundestag* renewed the commitment for another year to keep German forces and Tornado aircraft in Afghanistan. Chancellor Merkel rejected an appeal by the NATO Secretary General to send some of Germany's forces to the south for stabilization operations.

Public support in Germany for the Afghan mission has steadily declined. In 2002, 51% of those polled supported German involvement in Afghanistan's stabilization; as of October 2007, that figure has declined to 34%. Under the preceding Schroeder government, Berlin was adamant that German forces would not engage in combat operations; according to NATO officials, the German caveat against combat has limited the alliance in integrating German forces with those of other allied governments. Some observers fault Merkel for failing to lay out the importance of the Afghan mission to the German people.[29]

Some officials from other allied governments and the EU have criticized the existing restrictions on German forces and the capabilities of those forces. These officials say that German troops and civilians rarely venture beyond the perimeter of their PRTs due to concern that they might arouse Afghan public criticism or come into contact with armed elements. German troops reportedly do not go on extended patrols and do not respond to local security incidents. Critics of the German approach say that it is important to engage local officials and demonstrate that NATO has an active approach to rebuilding the country and persuading the Afghan population that the alliance is serving a constructive role.[30]

Some U.S. and European officials are also critical of the manner in which Germany managed its task of training the Afghan police force (ANP). The task was a daunting one, given the low pay provided by the Afghan government and the modest numbers of police used to cover a broad territory. In this view, the Afghan police remain "corrupt and hollow" as a force. At the same time, former SACEUR General Jones said that while training of the Afghan army is "one of the bright stories, one of the not-so-good stories ... is the inadequacy to bring similar progress to police reform, which is the responsibility of Germany." Part of the problem may lie in the lack of authority of the German government to order police to Afghanistan; unlike its military forces, German police must volunteer for such an assignment.[31]

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[28] "Germany/Afghanistan," *Atlantic News*, June 15, 2006, p. 2; "Canadian and Dutch Publics Feeling Stretched by Expanded Military Role in Afghanistan," World Public Opinion Organization, June 2, 2006.

[29] Judy Dempsey, "Merkel aloof as public wavers on Afghanistan," *International Herald Tribune*, October 19, 2007, p. 2.

[30] Interviews with European and U.S. officials and observers, June-July 2006.

[31] Cited in "If Called to Lebanon, NATO 'Could Go In,'" *International Herald Tribune*, July 28, 2006, p. 3; interviews, fall 2006.

In May 2007, the EU accepted a request by NATO to take the lead in training Afghanistan's police, a mission that began in June 2007. The police play a key role in Afghanistan's stabilization because they, along with the Afghan army, have primary responsibility for destroying poppy fields and opium labs.[32] The EU effort has faltered thus far, for several reasons. Turkey is reportedly blocking any provision by NATO of intelligence to the EU and the Afghan police because (Greek) Cyprus and Malta, both in the EU, are not NATO members. Turkey is also blocking any agreement for NATO to provide protection to police who come under attack by the Taliban. Turkey's actions are a side effect of its dispute with the EU over a range of issues. In September 2007, the German general heading the EU police training mission reportedly quit in frustration over these complications, and due to the corruption encountered in dealing with the Karzai government.[33]

The Netherlands: An Increasingly Decisive Position

Dutch forces are concentrated in the south, in Uruzgan province, one of Afghanistan's most unstable regions and an area that has seen considerable Taliban activity since spring 2006. The Abu Ghraib prison scandal and U.S. treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo are important issues in the Dutch debate over Afghanistan. Dutch officials say that "the rules of the road in fighting terrorism" are not clearly agreed upon in the alliance. For this reason, Dutch officials were initially reluctant to have their forces closely associated with U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The Netherlands was the principal proponent of the section of the December 2005 NATO communiqué detailing allied treatment of prisoners in Afghanistan.[34]

Initial Dutch efforts in ISAF were tentative and indecisive. However, Dutch troops have grown increasingly engaged in providing security, in tandem with an active and well-funded reconstruction effort.

Dutch officials offer a strategic approach to Afghanistan's problems. They believe that the alliance must make a more concerted effort to engage regional countries — above all, Pakistan, India, and Iran — to bring stability to the country. These officials are concerned that NATO's military operations are alienating the Afghan population. They advocate creation of a general fund to rapidly compensate local victims of mistaken attacks by NATO forces. In addition, they advocate appointment of a western coordinator for reconstruction of the country, a position supported by NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, as well as a common approach in NATO and the EU to the problems presented by the drug trade. In the

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[32] "Foreign Troops in North Afghanistan Say 'Drug Wars' the Biggest Threat," *Agence France Presse*, August 30, 2005; "Shake-up of Afghan Police 'Brought Back Corruption,'" *Financial Times*, June 13, 2006, p. 2.

[33] "German giving up on Afghan position," *International Herald Tribune*, September 12, 2007, p. 1; interviews with officials from allied governments, June-September, 2007.

[34] Discussions with Dutch officials, September 2005-May 2006.

Dutch view — echoed by Italy — NATO must emphasize reconstruction more than combat operations.[35]

Others counter this argument by saying that "there can be no reconstruction without security." The Taliban must be cleared out before reconstruction can proceed. The issue may be more complicated, however. U.S. General Karl Eikenberry, now the deputy of the NATO Military Committee, believes that many Taliban are not individuals who have hidden themselves in Pakistan or elsewhere outside Afghanistan, but are above all "the unemployed," those currently without a stake in Afghan society. In his view, to weaken the Taliban, NATO should build roads and other economic infrastructure to help create an economy to give Afghans promise of a future.[36] In a sense, his view is close to that of Dutch officials.

The Dutch government was the most publicly critical of U.S. handling of prisoners taken in the conflict against terrorism. Dutch government spokesmen and opposition leaders criticized U.S. handling of prisoners who had been sent to Guantanamo and called for treatment of detainees to meet the strictures of "international law." In a memorandum of understanding with the Afghan government, the Netherlands secured a pledge that prisoners turned over to Kabul would not receive the death penalty for any crimes committed. The Dutch expressed their desire to the Afghan government that such prisoners not be turned over to the United States.[37]

In the Dutch view, ISAF's purpose is "to provide a secure and stable environment for reconstruction." Former Dutch Foreign Minister Bot outlined his government's policy by saying that measures of "defense, diplomacy, and development" are key to ISAF's success. When necessary, Dutch troops will use force to subdue the Taliban to build stability so that reconstruction projects may take hold. A growing number of combat engagements, occasionally with U.S. troops, has occurred since late summer 2006, and Dutch forces have suffered casualties.[38] The Netherlands endorsed the "synergy" of ISAF and OEF commands and has made available four F-16s for missions in both ISAF and OEF. The aircraft may be used for missions from intelligence gathering to close air support. The Netherlands now has 1,500 troops in Afghanistan in restive Uruzgan province. Another 250 Dutch troops serve in Kabul and in northern Afghanistan.

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[35] Remarks by Bert Koenders, Minister for Development and Cooperation, The Netherlands, at CSIS, Washington, DC, April 16, 2007. Koenders is the highly regarded former President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and is well-versed in NATO issues. For a view advocating EU coordination of reconstruction/civilian programs in Afghanistan, see Julianne Smith, "How the EU Can Act Now to Assist Global Leadership," CSIS report, March 26, 2007.

[36] Remarks of Gen. Eikenberry at Brookings conference on Europe, April 30, 2007.

[37] "Peacekeeping in Afghanistan Is Modern Crisis Management ...," *op. cit*., p. 3-4.

[38] Bernard Bot, "Saving Democracy in a World of Change," speech at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, October 24, 2006; interviews, 2007.

The Dutch give their funding for PRT reconstruction activities directly to the Afghan central government, mainly through U.N. and World Bank channels. Dutch officials note the contrast with the U.S. approach, which is to bring in a "turnkey" operation in which U.S. officials are trained to undertake reconstruction projects, using U.S. manpower and equipment. The Dutch argue that the Karzai government itself must undertake responsibility for planning and implementation of projects to rebuild the country. Only in this way, the Dutch believe, can the Afghans learn good governance and management of their own affairs. The Dutch are directly involved in some projects, providing clean water to villages and almond trees and seeds to farmers for alternative crops, for example. Some U.S. officials believe that the Dutch practice of providing assistance funds directly to the Afghan government has led to the money being spent on other governmental purposes or landing in the pockets of corrupt Afghan officials.[39]

The contentious debate in the Dutch parliament in February 2006 over sending troops to Afghanistan raised issues still not fully resolved. Public support for Dutch troops being sent to Afghanistan has dropped sharply. In 2004, 66% of those polled supported the mission; by January 2006 that figure had halved, standing at 33%. The parliamentary vote in February 2006 provided a two-year commitment of 1,500 to 1,800 troops. The parliament also voted for a multi-year reconstruction budget for Afghanistan that will last until the end of 2009.

The United States, Britain, and Canada: A Broad Mandate

The governments of the United States, Britain, and Canada share similar views on how ISAF should fulfil its mission. They have sent combat forces to Afghanistan, maintain PRTs in the most unstable parts of the country, and have engaged the Taliban resurgence aggressively. Many of the British and Canadian forces for Stage Three began to arrive in Afghanistan in spring 2006, and worked under OEF command fighting the Taliban. On July 31, 2006, most of these forces were "rebadged" as NATO forces serving ISAF's Stage Three mission.

The United States has approximately 7,000 troops in OEF. The U.S.-led OEF controlled southern Afghanistan until ISAF's succession there at the end of July 2006. The United States now has 15,000-17,000 troops in ISAF.

U.S. officials believe that ISAF must undertake tasks "from the lowest level of peacekeeping to combat operations against the Taliban and warlords." OEF's task should be counter-terrorism against Al Qaeda. These officials concede that the line between the two operations is blurred, given that OEF has been fighting both an insurgency led by the Taliban and searching for Al Qaeda.[40] Some allied governments believe that the U.S. combat effort is overly aggressive and, in some instances, has been counterproductive. President Karzai has said that U.S. air strikes have sometimes been poorly targeted and have carelessly killed civilians, which he believes may be alienating the population in some areas of the country. In July 2007,

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[39] Discussions with Dutch and U.S. officials, February-July 2006.

[40] Discussions with U.S. officials, 2006-2007.

NATO announced a new policy. ISAF will postpone a combat response, where possible, when civilians are present near the Taliban; in addition, ISAF aircraft will use smaller bombs to limit damage to an area.[41]

The Bush Administration has a well-developed view of the role of PRTs. U.S. PRTs, as noted earlier, are a mixture of combat forces to provide security and logistical support, Agency for International Development (AID) personnel to develop reconstruction plans, and State Department officials to oversee and coordinate operations. In the U.S. view, PRTs should be initially established in remote areas where most non-governmental organizations will not go. The PRTs undertake reconstruction projects such as road building to enhance economic development and irrigation networks to assist in agricultural development and diversification, and political tasks, ranging from gaining the confidence of local officials to "workshops" to educate officials and tribal leaders in governance and long-term reconstruction plans. Administration officials express concern that when U.S. PRTs are turned over to ISAF, succeeding allied governments sometimes take a more guarded approach to reconstruction and stabilization, or put less money into PRT projects.[42]

The British view mirrors the U.S. view of NATO's role in Afghanistan. Britain has ISAF and OEF contingents, and its combat aircraft support both missions. Most of Britain's ISAF troops, numbering approximately 5,800 in the entire country and 4,200 in the south, are combat units. British forces in the south are largely in Helmand province, the principal poppy-growing region in the country; Britain leads the ISAF effort in counter-narcotics. British forces have an "inkblot" strategy, in which they clear an area of Taliban, then undertake reconstruction projects, such as road building, moving out from a village into the countryside.[43] The new British government under Gordon Brown has reaffirmed the U.K.'s commitment to ISAF.

From a hesitant position on ISAF's mission in early 2006, noted earlier, the British government has adopted a more aggressive stance, caused by the increase in Taliban activity in southern Afghanistan. Britain has a clearly vested interest in ISAF's stabilization mission, not only out of concern that terrorist activity has emanated from south Asia but because most of the heroin found in the United Kingdom comes from Afghanistan. U.S. officials believe that Britain's PRT in Helmand province is well-funded and concentrates on local governance and economic development.[44]

Canada also has primarily combat forces in Afghanistan, in both OEF and ISAF. There is a vigorous debate in Canada over the country's involvement in Afghanistan. In May 2006, by a narrow vote of 149-145, the Canadian parliament approved

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[41] "NATO plans to reduce Afghan casualties," *Financial Times*, July 30, 2007, p. 1.

[42] "Provincial Reconstruction Teams ...," *op. cit.*, Dept of Defense, p. 9-20; interviews with U.S. officials serving in PRTs, 2005-2007.

[43] "For British in an Afghan province, initial gains against the Taliban,"*New York Times*, August 5, 2007, p. 1.

[44] "Provincial Reconstruction Teams ...," *op. cit.*, Dept. of Defense, p. 22; "Opium War an Absolute Disaster," *Financial Times*, July 5, 2006, p. 3.

Ottawa's plan to commit 2300 troops to ISAF until February 2009. Public support for the mission has fallen, however. In 2002, 66% of those polled supported sending Canadian forces to Afghanistan, and only 44% supported the two-year extension for Canadian troops. By April 2007, support for keeping Canadian forces in Afghanistan had dropped to 52%. While Canadians appear to support their country's long involvement in U.N. peace operations, the need for combat operations in Afghanistan has eroded support for the ISAF mission.[45]

Canadian forces joined U.S. and British forces in summer and fall 2006 OEF combat operations against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan. Some of these operations, led by Canadian teams, were joined by Afghan army (ANA) elements in Qandahar province. The Canadians eventually wish to turn over such operations to the ANA. Some of the Canadian forces assigned to OEF were transferred to ISAF's Stage Three operations on July 31, 2006, and Qandahar province is their principal region of responsibility. Canada leads a PRT in the province.

In April 2007, the Canadian House of Commons narrowly defeated a bill to withdraw Canadian troops by a 150-134 margin. Increasingly, members of the Canadian Parliament and the media are calling upon other NATO governments to take Canadian forces' place in southern Afghanistan.[46]

France: Combat and Stabilization

The French government believes that ISAF must be a combat force that buttresses the efforts of the Afghan government to build legitimacy and governance. Unlike German forces, for example, many French forces are trained both for combat and stabilization. France has 1,100 troops in ISAF; most are in a stabilization mission in Kabul and in army training missions elsewhere in the country. France and the United States have the largest military training missions in Afghanistan. Paris withdrew 220 special forces from the OEF in early 2007. France has another 950 troops acting in the region in support of ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The new French government under Nicolas Sarkozy has reaffirmed Paris's commitment to ISAF, but has said that French forces will not stay "indefinitely." At the same time, France moved 4 Mirage fighter bombers from a French base in Tajikistan to the NATO base in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. These jets are used in intelligence and close air support missions; their relocation to Kandahar will allow them to spend more time in the air on mission rather than on the long return to Tajikistan for resupply.[47]

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[45] "Canada Votes to Extend Mission in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, May 18, 2006, p. A18; "Canadian and Dutch Publics Feeling Stretched ...," op. cit.; "Troop Pullout Bill Defeated in Canada," *Washington Post*, April 25, 2007, p. A12.

[46] "Troop Pullout Bill...," op. cit.

[47] "La France redéploie ses avions de combat dans le Sud afghan," *Le Monde*, August 31, 2007, p. 4.

The Afghan mission has marked important changes in French NATO policy. France supported the invocation of Article V, NATO's mutual security clause, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, on the United States. Those attacks were decisive in the French government's change of position on NATO's "out-of-area" responsibilities. For many years, Paris had argued that NATO was a European security organization, and must only operate in and near Europe. After September 11, the French government embraced the emerging view that NATO must be a global security organization able to combat terrorism and WMD proliferation around the planet. French officials say that ISAF is NATO's most important mission.[48]

Since the late 1990s, NATO has urged member governments to construct more "deployable," expeditionary forces, and gave the notion a concrete base in the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) in 2002, when allies pledged to develop capabilities such as strategic lift, aerial refueling, and more special forces.[49] Among the European allies, France has made considerable progress along this path. French aerial tankers refuel not only French aircraft in the Afghan theater, but U.S., Dutch, and Belgian aircraft as well. These capabilities have contributed to the improving integration of NATO forces in the Afghan theater, according to U.S. officials, and to the ability of ISAF and OEF to share capabilities and command.[50] U.S. officials give French forces high marks for their ability and their willingness to fight.

The French government has clearly defined its interests in Afghanistan. French officials argue that the allies must commit to a long effort to assist the Afghan government in eradicating the opium industry, in part because heroin finds its way into western societies, in part because it fuels terrorist groups. Ultimately, French officials believe that the Afghan government itself must learn to govern the country, and that NATO and partner states cannot do this for Kabul. To this end, the French have a contingent in place that assists in training the Afghan army. France does not believe that PRTs can play a meaningful role in Afghanistan, and believes that the Karzai government must itself exercise the initiative and build good governance to gain the confidence of its people. France does not accept the view, held by some U.S. officials but nowhere present in NATO's ISAF mission statement, that part of NATO's brief is to build democracy in Afghanistan. In the French view, Afghanistan is a highly diverse ethnic state with no tradition of democracy; at best, for the foreseeable future, a more representative and tolerant society can be built.[51]

France also contends that the EU and other civilian institutions, such as the U.N. and the World Bank, are more suited to undertake development projects than NATO. In Paris' view, NATO should concentrate on collective defense.

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[48] Interviews with French and U.S. officials; Remarks by Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly plenary, Paris, May 30, 2006.

[49] CRS Report RS21659, *NATO's Prague Capabilities Commitment*, by Carl W. Ek.

[50] Interviews with U.S. and French officials, 2005-2007; "France Quietly Offers More Military Help," *Army Times*, August 29, 2005; "Français et Américains louent une coopération exemplaire en Afghanistan," *Le Monde*, October 24-25, 2004, p. 3.

[51] Interviews with French officials, August 2005-July 2006; Alliot-Marie, *op. cit*. Afghanistan supplies an estimated 90% of the heroin that finds its way to France.

French officials are less likely to parse the NATO-defined difference that OEF is a counter-terror operation and ISAF is a counter-insurgency and reconstruction mission. French forces fight in both operations, and describe both operations as fighting terrorism and developing a more stable society.[52]

Stage Four

On October 5, 2006, ISAF extended its responsibilities to cover all of Afghanistan. An OEF reduced in size will continue its operations under U.S. leadership against terrorist elements.

In September 2006, then NATO SACEUR General Jones again called for more troops for ISAF to be contributed by European governments. He said that 2,500 troops were necessary, of which 1,000 should serve as a mobile reserve component able to move rapidly to trouble spots around the entire country. He expressed frustration at the limitations that some allies place on their troops. "It's not enough," he said, "to simply provide forces if those forces have restrictions on them that limit them from being effective."[53] He had specifically requested that Germany send some of its force in northern Afghanistan into the south to combat Taliban activity, but the German government refused this request. Poland eventually pledged to send 1,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, a figure that still left ISAF short of the needed overall force contingent.[54] In early 2007, the Bush Administration filled much of the shortfall by sending a rapid-response brigade of 3,500 soldiers to Afghanistan.

European public opinion on the NATO mission in Afghanistan is complicating allied efforts to sustain ISAF. The German Marshall Fund poll noted earlier found that while 64% of those polled support the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, only 30% support combat operations against the Taliban.[55]

In Stage Four, the United States transferred 10,000 to 12,000 of its own troops to ISAF, who will serve under the NATO commander U.S. General Dan McNeil. ISAF now has approximately 35,000 troops.

Congressional Action

A bipartisan consensus continues to support the Afghan mission in the 110th Congress. The Afghan Freedom Support Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-327), as amended, authorizes U.S. aid for reconstruction, military operations, counter-narcotics efforts, election reform, and human rights assistance. A succession of appropriations bills has met or exceeded authorization targets.

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[52] Alliot-Marie, *op. cit.*

[53] "NATO Commander Asks Member Nations to Drop Troop Limits," *Mideast Stars and Stripes*, October 25, 2006.

[54] "Leaving NATO, Marine General Still Seeks Troops for Afghanistan," *New York Times*, December 21, 2006, p. A4.

[55] *Transatlantic Trends, op. cit.*, p. 17-18.

Assessment

The allies have maintained a basic unity of purpose in Afghanistan. Their desire to stabilize the country to prevent the return of a terrorist state has led to an ongoing general consensus. Member states that refused to contribute troops to the U.S. effort to bring order to Iraq are present in Afghanistan. The allies believe that there is a tangible benefit to ISAF. If ultimately successful, ISAF can help to build a state that is relatively stable, no longer a source of international terrorism., and one that attempts to diminish a narcotics trade that is a threat to European societies.

Nevertheless, NATO faces complex issues in its own ranks and on the ground in Afghanistan that are likely to concern ISAF over the next several years. Although the allies agree on their overall mission to stabilize the country, they often differ on the means to reach that objective and on the amount of resources to be made available.

Although ISAF does not explicitly have a counter-terror mission, it is clear that contributing governments believe that fighting the Taliban, warlords, and the narcotics trade can prevent the return of Al Qaeda or radical Islamic groups inimical to western interests.

NATO leaders have at times had difficulty in persuading allies to contribute forces to ISAF. Of equal difficulty today is the effort to persuade governments to contribute the money necessary to rebuild Afghanistan. Some governments have pledged money but have not yet contributed it. Key allied governments say that they are committed to staying for a period of years to stabilize the country. Some EU officials believe that five years or more will be necessary to build a market economy and proficient governance.[56]

Afghanistan's long history without a central government able to extend its reach over the country's difficult geographic and political terrain is presenting the allies with problems rivaling the threat of the Taliban. Political differences within the alliance over how to manage Afghanistan's future are apparent in ISAF's operations. The allies' description of PRTs as the "leading edge" of their stabilization effort masks a divergent reality. Some PRTs are clearly effective, building needed infrastructure and by most accounts gaining the confidence of local populations. Others, in the view of some U.S. and European officials, are no more than showcases, aimed more at demonstrating an ally's desire to participate in an important NATO mission than at producing concrete results for the stabilization plan. In the view of these same officials, NATO may be expecting too much from some of its new member governments, which, only recently coming out of communism, lack

[56] "EU/Afghanistan: Europeans must Prepare for Losses ...," *Atlantic News*, July 20, 2006, p. 2.

the experience and the funds to mount an effective reconstruction effort in a distant, impoverished country.[57]

The declining fortunes of the Karzai government also present a difficult obstacle. NATO is attempting both to respect the policies of a nascent representative government and to urge it forward to better governance. The Karzai government's own problems are apparent: discontented warlords, a vigorous drug trade, the Taliban, and a rudimentary economy and infrastructure. In the view of General Eikenberry, "The enemy we face is not particularly strong, but the institutions of the Afghan state remain relatively weak."[58] There is a widespread view that President Karzai is losing the confidence of the Afghan people; he blames the slow pace of reconstruction and insufficient financial support from the international community. General Ed Butler, the former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, said in May 2006: "This year we need to be seen to be making a difference. It is a real danger that if people do not feel safer, we may lose their consent." In his view, poor governance and not the Taliban insurgency is the country's central problem, a view widely reflected by other officials from NATO governments.[59] NATO, in this view, must prepare to deal with successive governments of unknown composition and policies should the Karzai government fail to endure.

NATO's effort to assist the Karzai government in weakening the narcotics trade demonstrates the central dilemma of ISAF's mission. The allies must fight an insurgency tied to the opium industry with forceful means while at the same time attempt to win the confidence of the Afghan people through reconstruction of the country. In this view, "breaking down suspected insurgents' doors in the morning [makes] it difficult to build bridges in the afternoon."[60] While NATO officials state publicly that allied forces are not burning poppy fields and are depending instead on the Afghan army and police to do the job, farmers are well aware that it is ISAF that supplies the intelligence, training, and logistics enabling government security forces to attack the industry, the lifeline of many poor Afghans.[61]

NATO's training of Afghan officials has made measured progress in some areas, and very little in others. Although the Karzai government has complained that NATO is not building a sufficiently large army, most allies believe that substantial progress has been made in developing a professional and reliable force. Since the

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[57] Interviews with U.S. and European officials, 2006-2007.

[58] House Armed Services Committee, hearing on "Security and Stability in Afghanistan," June 28, 2006.

[59] "UK Troops 'Must Beat Back the Taliban this Year,'" *Financial Times*, May 23, 2006, p. 7; interviews with U.S. and European officials, 2006-2007.

[60] "Mission Impossible? Why Stabilising Afghanistan Will Be a Stiff Test for NATO," *Financial Times*, July 31, 2006, p. 9. The quotation is a paraphrase by the *Financial Times* of a French official who was reflecting on a similar dilemma for French forces in Algeria in the 1950s.

[61] Interviews with U.S. and British officials, 2005-2007.

beginning of Stage Three, British and Canadian troops have reportedly given more and more responsibility to the ANA in joint operations.[62]

NATO and the broader international community are now making a more substantial effort to reform the judicial system and build an effective police force. Italy has successfully urged donor nations to provide more funding to build a judicial system and to begin implementation of specific programs using the funds. The EU has assumed responsibility for training the police, and put professional trainers on the ground in June 2007.

The quality and practices of NATO's own forces have also come into question by some U.S. and European officials. It has already been noted that some of NATO's newer member states attempt to manage PRTs with troops not yet trained for a stabilization mission in a dangerous environment. Some NATO forces also do not have the appropriate equipment for their tasks. They may lack night-vision equipment, or the technology necessary to detect roadside bombs. Some NATO governments send forces inappropriate for the task, forces that are heavy on support functions but light on combat capabilities. These governments tend to be reluctant to send their forces out into the field to confront the Taliban and to control warlords and their militias. The result, in this view, has been that British, Canadian, Dutch, and U.S. forces bear a disproportionate share of the most dangerous tasks.[63]

The United States has made an evident effort through its PRTs to engage local Afghan leaders and the general population to convince them of the worth of ISAF's mission. While some progress has clearly been made, several U.S. officials have noted that Afghanistan is a society where personal contact and developed relationships are critical in building trust and in persuading Afghans to pursue better governance. The short rotations of some allied forces impede this effort. Some allied governments, however, are now sending troops into Afghanistan for two-year rotations, which provide a better opportunity to gain the confidence of the population.

Cohesiveness of command is another lingering issue. While the allies reached agreement on a command structure linking ISAF and OEF, some observers believe that national commands will preserve the authority to make final decisions about use of their forces. The Dutch parliamentary debate clearly signaled this inclination.

ISAF may be having a residual, positive effect on the militaries of some NATO members, particularly new member states. U.S. military personnel say that true reform of new members' militaries can best take place in the field, under difficult conditions, and through operations with more experienced NATO militaries. By several accounts, this experience is being gained in Afghanistan.[64]

The allies have a consensus that reconstruction is the key to building a viable, functioning Afghan state. Officials in allied governments repeatedly point to the

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[62] "Army Woefully Unready, Afghans Say," *Globe and Mail*, November 16, 2006, p. A13.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Interviews with military officers from NATO governments, 2006-2007.

need for more road building to extend the reach of Kabul and to provide the infrastructure to diversify and strengthen the economy of a country lacking the capacity to develop enduring market practices. General Eikenberry, when asked by a congressional committee what he needed to build a stable society, responded, "Would I prefer to have another infantry battalion on the ground of 600 U.S. soldiers or would I prefer to have $50 million for roads, I'd say ... $50 million for roads."[65] His view has been echoed by calls from the NATO Secretary General for allies and international institutions to provide more funds for reconstruction.

Prospects

The Afghanistan mission is an important test of NATO's out-of-area capability. In a view of growing prevalence, Afghanistan exemplifies conditions in which "extreme belief systems, ... unstable and intolerant societies, strategic crime and the globalization of commodities and communications combine to create a multi-dimensional threat transcending geography, function, and capability."[66]

The attacks of September 11, 2001, led the Bush Administration to abandon its skepticism about nation-building as a task for the United States or for NATO. Today, the Pentagon gives great attention to training forces for nation-building; other allies have also embraced stabilization and reconstruction as central to NATO's mission.

NATO's exit strategy requires laying the economic foundations and providing the security for a fledgling government to find a stable political footing that excludes violence, reduces corruption, and creates a climate conducive to representative institutions. External factors will affect realization of this exit strategy. Stabilization of Afghanistan is closely linked to developments in and the intentions of neighboring Iran and Pakistan, a situation that many in the alliance believe demands a continuing U.S. presence.[67] For these reasons, the allies believe that the success of the mission will also be a test of the United States' ability and commitment to lead NATO, even if they do not always agree with every element of U.S. policy in the country.

U.S. leadership of the alliance appears to be at a key moment. The Bush Administration has been unable to persuade the allies to play a major role in Iraq. Among the allies, broader U.S. Middle East policy is widely seen as a failure. U.S. support for the development of democratic governments is a controversial policy. In Iraq and the Palestinian Authority, where democratic elections have taken place at U.S. urging, factions supported by Iran have fared well, enhancing Tehran's influence in a region where it was long kept at bay. Strong U.S. support for Israel in its conflict with Lebanon is another factor seen in Europe as serving to radicalize Arab

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[65] House Armed Services Committee, *op. cit*.

[66] Julian Lindley-French, "Big World, Big Future, Big NATO," *NATO Review*, Winter 2005, p. 5.

[67] Olivier Roy, "Afghanistan: La Difficile Reconstruction d'un État," *Cahiers de Chailliot*, December 2004.

populations against western interests.[68] In contrast, the United States and its NATO allies have greater unity of purpose in Afghanistan. The ultimate outcome of NATO's effort to stabilize Afghanistan and U.S. leadership of that effort may well affect the cohesiveness of the alliance and Washington's ability to shape NATO's future.

Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan

Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS. (8/23/06)

[68] "US Policy in the Middle East Unravels," *Financial Times*, August 4, 2006, p. 3; "Washington, en s'alignant sur Israël, a perdu son influence dans la région," *Le Monde*, July 20, 2003, p. 3.