



## Military Campaign in Afghanistan

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In the last year the military campaign in Afghanistan has taken on a fresh slant as Coalition allies have moved towards counterinsurgency operations that emphasise population security, and have begun drawing up longer term plans to strengthen the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces with a view to transitioning security control to the ANSF from the end of 2010 in order that Coalition military forces can begin to withdraw from mid-2011. As part of that strategy a surge of 30,000 US and 10,000 additional Coalition forces are being deployed to the country in the first half of 2010, which will bring the total ISAF force in Afghanistan to approximately 150,000 personnel by the end of 2010. Following the announcement in July 2010 that 300 additional military personnel would temporarily be deployed to Afghanistan, British forces in the country are expected to total 10,300 personnel.

Although the military campaign is increasingly being viewed within the context of the wider political and economic strategy for Afghanistan this note does not examine those issues, except where they impact upon the military campaign. Further detail on the US administration's 'AfPak' strategy is available in several Library papers which are listed in the related papers section.

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# 1 Background

## 1.1 ISAF Mandate

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 of December 2001 laid down the initial mandate for a 5,000-strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to deploy to the region in, and immediately around, Kabul, in order to provide security and to assist in the reconstruction of the country under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

While UN mandated, the ISAF force is not, however, deployed under the guise of the UN. In November 2001 the then UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, recommended, as part of his wider proposals that led to the Bonn Agreement, that a new security force for Afghanistan be established. He also suggested, however, that a UN peacekeeping force could not be recommended, partly because of the time it would take to form and partly because:

UN peacekeepers have proven most successful when deployed to implement an existing political settlement among willing parties - not to serve as a substitute for one. Any security force established in the absence of a credible cease-fire agreement or political settlement, whether constituted by Afghans, international personnel, or both, could quickly find itself in the role of combatant. This is not a role for 'Blue Helmets.'<sup>1</sup>

Until August 2003 when NATO assumed command, the ISAF operation was subsequently conducted as a UN-mandated coalition of the willing.

Since UNSCR 1386, the UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions extending the deployment of ISAF, including UNSCR 1510 in October 2003 which expanded the ISAF mandate to cover the whole of Afghanistan and thereby lay the groundwork for ISAF commanders to expand operations beyond Kabul.

UN Security Council Resolution 1890 (2009) currently authorises the presence of ISAF until 13 October 2010.<sup>2</sup>

A detailed Military Technical Agreement agreed between the ISAF Commander and the Afghan Transitional Authority in January 2002 provides additional guidance for ISAF operations.

## 1.2 Area of Operations

UNSCR 1510 (2003) expanded the ISAF operation to cover the whole of Afghanistan. Between October 2003 and the end of 2005 ISAF operations were subsequently expanded into the north and west of the country. Deployment of ISAF forces into the southern provinces was endorsed by NATO Leaders in December 2005 and achieved on 31 July 2006; while command of the final 14 eastern provinces of Afghanistan was assumed on 5 October 2006.

NATO-led ISAF forces do not operate in Pakistan, although forces do operate near the Afghan-Pakistani border.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.un.org/news/dh/latest/afghan/brahimi-sc-briefing.htm](http://www.un.org/news/dh/latest/afghan/brahimi-sc-briefing.htm)

<sup>2</sup> A copy of UNSCR 1890 is available online at:  
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/550/19/PDF/N0955019.pdf?OpenElement>

### 1.3 Mission

In a Statement to the House on 14 October 2009, the then Prime Minister stated:

Every time I read to this House the names of those who have lost their lives in Afghanistan, every time I write a letter of condolence to their families and every time I meet the wounded at Selly Oak, I ask myself the question that has been asked already today—whether we can justify sending our young men and women to join our allies to fight on the other side of the world. I have to conclude that, when the safety of our country is at stake, we cannot and will not walk away; that three-quarters of the most serious terror plots against the UK have roots in the border and mountain areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan; that, as our security services report directly to me, while the sustained pressure on al-Qaeda in Pakistan combined with military action in Afghanistan is having a suppressive effect on al-Qaeda, the main element of the threat to Britain still emanates from al-Qaeda and Pakistan; and that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan would be a strategic failure for al-Qaeda.

Our objective is clear and focused—to prevent al-Qaeda launching attacks on our streets and threatening legitimate government in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But if we limit ourselves simply to targeting al-Qaeda, without building the capacity of Afghanistan and Pakistan to deal with terrorism and violent extremism, the security gains will not endure. So over the last two years we have sought to build and support the Afghan army and police and to work with the Pakistan security forces. Our strategy is dedicated to counter-insurgency and what we have called “Afghanisation”.<sup>3</sup>

NATO’s main role in Afghanistan is to contribute to the achievement of that objective by assisting the Afghan Government in exercising and extending its authority across the country and creating a secure environment with a view to paving the way for reconstruction and effective governance. ISAF is a key component in achieving those aims and has the following mission objectives:

- Conducting stability and security operations throughout the country in coordination with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), an increasing number of which are being led by the ANSF.
- Through the NATO Training Mission (NTM-A), ISAF forces are mentoring, training and equipping the ANSF, to enable the international community to gradually hand over security responsibility to the Afghans. This is being done in partnership with the United States, which runs its training and equipping activities through the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan (CSTC-A). ISAF also works in co-ordination in the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL).<sup>4</sup>

ISAF troop contributing nations have deployed a number of Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) and Police OMLTs (POMLTs) which are embedded in ANA and ANP units to support training and deploy on operations in an advisory role. Equipping the ANSF is co-ordinated by the NATO Equipment Donation Programme and supported by the ANA Trust Fund which covers the transportation and installation costs of equipment donations, the purchase of equipment, the purchase of services for engineering and construction projects, and training, both inside and outside Afghanistan.

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<sup>3</sup> HC Deb 14 October 2009, c299

<sup>4</sup> Further information on EUPOL is available at:  
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1268&lang=fr>

- Supporting the Afghan government in Disarming Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG).
- Facilitating the management of ANA ammunition depots. NATO administers a trust fund project, agreed between the Afghan government, ISAF nations and the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency, aimed at enhancing the physical security of ANA ammunition depots and at supporting the development of the ANA's ammunition stockpile management capabilities.
- Providing humanitarian assistance through the Post-Operations Humanitarian Relief Fund which has been established since 2006. The fund provides rapid assistance in the immediate aftermath of significant ISAF military operations. Assistance includes the provision of food, shelter and medicines as well as the repair of buildings or key infrastructure. Such assistance is provided on a short-term basis and responsibility is handed over to the civil sector as soon as circumstances permit. The fund consists entirely of voluntary donations from ISAF troop contributing nations.
- Identifying reconstruction needs, such as the rehabilitation of schools and medical facilities, restoring water supplies and providing support for other civil-military projects. Through its 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ISAF is supporting reconstruction and development and securing areas in which reconstruction work is being undertaken by other national and international actors. PRTs consist of both civilian and military personnel. While a PRT's civilian components lead on political, economic, humanitarian and social aspects of the PRT's work in support of the Afghan Government's development priorities, the military components of the PRT focus on increasing security and stability in the area, building security sector capacity and directing military assistance to the civilian elements, in particular in relation to transport, medical assistance and engineering.
- Assisting in humanitarian relief operations upon request by the Afghan government. ISAF troops have launched several relief missions distributing medication, food and winter supplies to help villagers cope with severe weather conditions in different parts of the country.
- Providing support to the Afghan government and internationally-sanctioned counter-narcotics efforts through intelligence-sharing and the conduct of an efficient public information campaign, as well as support to the Afghan National Army conducting counter-narcotics operations. ISAF also assists the training of the ANSF in counter-narcotics related activities and provides logistic support, when requested, for the delivery of alternative livelihood programmes.

Following calls from the US to tackle the drugs trade in Afghanistan more proactively in order to undermine the financial base of the Taliban insurgency, at an informal meeting on 9-10 October 2008 NATO Defence Ministers agreed to expand the counter narcotics role of the ISAF mission. This enhanced support by ISAF includes the destruction of processing facilities and action against narcotic producers if there is a clearly established link with the insurgency.<sup>5</sup> Such action can only be undertaken by

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<sup>5</sup> Narcotics facilities/facilitators are defined by NATO as all facilities associated with the narcotics industry and those individuals involved in the processing, storing and transporting of illegal narcotics or precursor chemicals that directly support the insurgency (NATO Fact Sheet, June 2009)

ISAF forces upon the request of the Afghan Government and with the consent of the national authorities of the forces involved.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.4 Command and Control

Since 2003 overall command of the NATO operation has rested with Allied Command Operations at SHAPE in Belgium; while Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Headquarters Brunssum has served as the NATO operational HQ for ISAF. Headquarters ISAF, located in Kabul has served as NATO's theatre level command for the operation, working with the Government of Afghanistan, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, international organisations and non-governmental organisations in implementing their mutual goals in the country. Since February 2007 HQ ISAF has been configured as a composite HQ with staff drawn from existing NATO Standing HQ and contributing ISAF nations, in contrast to the previous situation which saw the rotation of command between existing Corps HQ.<sup>7</sup>

In August 2009 NATO Member States agreed, however, to adjust the ISAF upper command structure to reflect the evolution in ISAF's scope and scale of responsibilities in the last three years, and the increasing need for greater co-operation with the Afghan authorities and other international partners. The decision was subsequently taken to separate the strategic and the day-to-day operational functions of ISAF with the establishment of a second intermediary HQ.

The new ISAF command structure will now comprise a higher operational headquarters, ISAF HQ, commanded by a four-star General (currently General David Petraeus)<sup>8</sup>; and a subordinate three-star headquarters, ISAF Joint Command (IJC) HQ, both located in Kabul:

- **ISAF HQ** – under this new command structure COMISAF will focus on the strategic political-military aspects of the ISAF mission, co-ordinating those ISAF operations with the work of the Afghan government and other international organisations in the country.

COMISAF will be dual-hatted as the Commander of ISAF and of US Forces in Afghanistan (COMUSFOR-A) thus ensuring the continued co-ordination of ISAF operations and Operation *Enduring Freedom*. COMISAF will have command responsibility over the IJC Commander, the Commander of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (see below) and Special Operations Forces.

- **ISAF Joint Command HQ** – COMIJC will be responsible for executing the full spectrum of tactical operations throughout the country, on a day-to-day basis, and have command of the Regional Commands, the PRT and other theatre enablers. In addition COMIJC will ensure the co-ordination of ISAF and ANSF operations.

The US acts as framework nation for the first manning of the ICJ HQ which achieved full operational capability in November 2009. However, the overall manning of the HQ is currently 17.5% below requirements.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_8189.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm)

<sup>7</sup> A list of those rotations is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/4854, *The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan*, 9 February 2009

<sup>8</sup> General Petraeus replaced General Stanley McChrystal as ISAF Commander and head of US forces in Afghanistan in June 2010 (formally assuming command on 4 July 2010). General McChrystal resigned in June following an article in [Rolling Stone](#) magazine in which he criticised the Obama administration.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

There will be a balanced representation of US and NATO personnel at both HQ.

### ***Regional Commands***

At the end of May 2010 the North Atlantic Council gave formal approval for the reorganisation of ISAF's Regional Command South into two regional commands: RC South West and RC South in order to allow commanders to focus on geographically smaller areas, ensure greater partnering between ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces and deliver the objective of increased governance, development and security in those regions.

Under IJC HQ there are now six Regional Commands (RC), which incorporate 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and several Forward Support Bases (FSB). The RC command all ISAF units in their area of responsibility and coordinate all regional civil-military activities conducted by the military elements of the PRT. Command of each RC is assumed by a lead nation and is composed of a Command and Control (C2) HQ and a Forward Support Base (FSB) which provides a supply, medical and transport hub in each region.

The RC are located and led, as follows:

- **Regional Command North** – HQ RC (N) and the FSB are located at Mazar-e-Sharif and led by Germany. There are six PRT under RC (N) command.
- **Regional Command Capital** – located in Kabul and is currently led by Turkey. RC Capital is a distinct entity from HQ ISAF.
- **Regional Command West** – located at Herat. Since July 2008 Italy has been the lead nation, assuming command responsibility from Spain. Spain has, however, retained operational responsibility for the FSB. There are four PRT under RC (W) command.
- **Regional Command South** – Located in Kandahar. The UK assumed command responsibility of RC South for 12 months in November 2009 and continues to do so after the division of RC south into two commands. The command of RC South is currently rotated between Canada, the Netherlands and the UK. RC South now has three PRT and control of an ISAF force of approximately 35,000 personnel in Kandahar, Daykundi, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces.
- **Regional Command South West** – Established in June 2010 and has responsibility for Helmand and Nimruz provinces. The US has assumed command of RC South West in the first instance, which in the longer term will operate as a rotational command between the US and UK.<sup>10</sup> The UK-led PRT at Lashkar Gah, and therefore the majority of British forces in Afghanistan, now fall within this command. In total RC South West currently comprises approximately 27,000 personnel from eight nations.
- **Regional Command East** – located at Bagram and led by the US. There are 13 PRT under RC (E) command.

On the division of RC South and the subsequent changes in command and control, Major General Gordon Messenger, Strategic Communications Officer to the British Chief of the Defence Staff, commented:

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<sup>10</sup> HC Deb 26 May 2010, c4WS

This command and control change makes complete sense and is welcome. The span and complexity of the command challenge in southern Afghanistan has increased enormously in recent months and these changes provide the best command support to the troops on the ground.

The change will also align the ISAF military structure in the south with the structure of the Afghan National Army, enabling a greater partnering capacity between ISAF and Afghan forces.

The UK has been closely involved in the preparations for this change and entirely agrees with its rationale. We are well accustomed to operating within a multinational coalition command structure and we are entirely content that the best interests of the UK force will be maintained under the new arrangements.<sup>11</sup>

### ***NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan HQ***

On 20 October 2009 NATO announced that it would establish a new NATO headquarters to oversee higher level training and mentoring for the ANSF. The then Commander of ISAF, General Stanley McChrystal, commented:

Through better coordination and collaboration between the various organizations currently supporting Afghan National Security Force development, we will be able to develop a more streamlined, efficient and effective training program, that allows for increased partnership with the Afghan security forces and accelerated progress in this vital security dimension of our mission here.<sup>12</sup>

Under the new organisational structure, the US-led training and mentoring programme of the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) will be integrated with ISAF efforts into a common HQ: NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A), under the command of COM NTM-A who will be double hatted as NATO/ISAF commander and commander of the US-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A).

The key elements of NTM-A will include the provision of training and mentoring teams to the ANA and the ANP, the institutional training of the ANA and ANP reform at the district level and below. CSTC-A will continue to mentor the Afghan Ministries of Defence and Interior and will be responsible for developing the Afghan National Air Corps, the logistics command and the Afghan national military hospital. However, in its April 2010 report to Congress the US Department of Defense noted that, at present, the NTM-A has a 32% shortfall in the required number of international trainers. That report went on to comment that “the United States has identified short-term solutions to man the most critical NTM-A trainer shortages through October 2010 and will continue to solicit additional resource from both NATO Allies and non-NATO partners”.<sup>13</sup>

### **1.5 Integration with Operation *Enduring Freedom***

Command and control in Afghanistan is complicated by the fact that, in addition to the deployment of the ISAF force, American and other forces have continued to operate independently in the country under Operation *Enduring Freedom*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> MOD Press Release, 21 May 2010

<sup>12</sup> NATO Press Release, 20 October 2009

<sup>13</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>14</sup> Operation *Enduring Freedom* was established in 2001 as the military response to the events of 9/11.

Given the focus of OEF in the southern and eastern provinces of the country, the NATO operational plan for expansion into the south in 2006 subsequently set out arrangements for greater command integration between the ISAF and OEF operations. According to a NATO statement:

ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the ongoing US-led military operation in Afghanistan, will continue to have separate mandates and missions. ISAF will continue to focus on its stabilisation and security mission whilst OEF will continue to carry out its counter-terrorism mission.

Clear command arrangements will coordinate, and where necessary, deconflict efforts within the two missions as agreed under the auspices of the operational plan.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this continued separation of mandates, it was acknowledged that ISAF rules of engagement would have to be reviewed in order to accommodate the operational challenges that operating in the south of the country could present. As part of NATO's expansion plan US forces operating in the south were also earmarked to come under the overall command responsibility of ISAF. This has not, however, been the case for the majority of US OEF forces in the eastern provinces. Although 12,000 US and other forces were transferred to ISAF command when NATO assumed command responsibility in the east in October 2006, approximately 20,000 US forces continued to operate in the region under the OEF banner.

Retention of two distinct operations in Afghanistan continued to attract criticism, in particular over the inconsistency in rules of engagement, the number of civilian casualties sustained and a lack of integration between the two operations.<sup>16</sup> The incursion of US forces over the Afghan/Pakistani border in mid-2008, for example, prompted ISAF to issue a press release at the beginning of September 2008 clarifying the nature of ISAF's Area of Operations.<sup>17</sup> Questions were also raised in the US over the feasibility of maintaining two combatant commands in one country.

On 6 October 2008 the Pentagon subsequently stood up US Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), a functioning command control HQ for all US forces operating in Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> In announcing the activation of USFOR-A, the Pentagon stated:

The stand up of USFOR-A headquarters is intended to enable the most efficient command and control of US forces in Afghanistan and ensure effective integration and coordination between US and coalition forces operating under NATO/ISAF [...]

Under this new arrangement, the approximately 20,000 US forces, operating as part of Operation Enduring freedom, will come under the operational control of USFOR-A. The ISAF and OEF chains of command will remain separate and distinct, and US Central Command will continue to oversee US counterterrorism and detainee operations.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> NATO statement on 21 December 2005. This is available online at:

[http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan\\_stage3/index.html](http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan_stage3/index.html)

<sup>16</sup> See "Debate flares anew about German military mission", *Spiegel Online*, 28 May 2007 and "Italy calls on US to wind down enduring freedom", *Defense News*, 25 July 2007

<sup>17</sup> A copy of that press release is available at: <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/mediaadvisory/2008/09-september/ma080904-053.html>

<sup>18</sup> USFOR-A also executes operational control of all detainee operations in Afghanistan through Joint Task Force-435 which is responsible for aligning OEF, ISAF and ANSF detention procedures and eventually transitioning responsibility for detention operations to the Afghan Government in 2011 (Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010)

<sup>19</sup> US Department of Defense Press Release, 6 October 2008

However, while the integration of US forces had been welcomed by some commentators,<sup>20</sup> the decision to integrate US forces into a single command did not meet with approval from all quarters. Robert Fox, commenting in *The Guardian* on 6 October 2008 argued:

There are now signs of a serious difference in approach between Britain and America. Increasingly the international effort in Afghanistan is becoming an all-American run show. The American commander [...] commands the international support and assistance force to the Karzai government (ISAF) as well as commanding the US operation enduring freedom against al-Qaida and its allies in George W. Bush's global "war on terror". He is running a split command and different missions.

"Increasingly the allies, even the ones doing the fighting like the Canadians, Dutch, Danes and Brits are becoming bit players – a sideshow", a British commander told me recently. "This is now an American mission".<sup>21</sup>

As an article in the *New York Times* on 8 August 2008 also pointed out:

The command reorganization implies that an American officer will be in charge of the NATO and American missions for the foreseeable future.<sup>22</sup>

In March 2010 the Pentagon announced its intention to integrate nearly all of the remaining 20,000 US troops currently operating in Afghanistan under Operation *Enduring Freedom* into ISAF, following calls by then USFOR-A/ISAF Commander General McChrystal to further simplify the military command structure in the country. Once that re-organisation has taken place only small detachments of US Special Forces and a detention unit will remain outside of the NATO command structure.<sup>23</sup>

Since 4 July 2010 USFOR-A has been commanded by General David Petraeus, who also serves as the Commander of ISAF.

## 1.6 Force Generation and National Caveats

Since the expansion of ISAF into the southern and eastern provinces in 2006, NATO Commanders and the leaders of several NATO nations have consistently called upon the Alliance's Member States to meet the force generation requirements of the ISAF operation.

Despite considerable pressure, progress in securing additional troop commitments has been sporadic, leading to allegations of unequal burden sharing within the Alliance, concern over the potential for a "two tier Alliance" to emerge,<sup>24</sup> and what then NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General John Craddock, called in October 2008 a "wavering political will" in Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup> Indeed a number of nations, most notably Canada, have periodically suggested that they would relinquish security responsibility for certain parts of the country

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<sup>20</sup> Defence Editor of *The Times*, Michael Evans commented that "sensibly, one US general will take command of both [operations]" ("Can King David bring order to the mountains of Afghanistan", *The Times*, 6 October 2008)

<sup>21</sup> Robert Fox, "A reality check for Britain's defence strategy", *The Guardian*, 6 October 2008

<sup>22</sup> "Gates pushing plan for Afghan army", *The New York Times*, 8 August 2008

<sup>23</sup> "Most US enduring freedom troops to join NATO's Afghan wing", *Agence France Presse*, 16 March 2010

<sup>24</sup> See "Gates warns of two-tier NATO", *The Financial Times*, 7 February 2008 and a Speech by the Secretary of State for Defence to the Royal United Services Institute on 19 September 2006. A copy of his full speech is available online at: <http://www.rusi.org/events/ref:E4507D412CAD4A/info:public/infoID:E450FB4C61AE34/>. In an interview on 4 September 2006 the then Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt had also suggested that Britain "was doing more than its share of what is required in Afghanistan" ("Britain's top new soldier", *The Guardian*, 4 September 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Speech to the Royal United Services Institute, 20 October 2008. A copy of that speech is available online at: <http://www.rusi.org/events/ref:E48EDD9A572226/info:public/infoID:E48FC6E8B5C05C>

and withdraw forces, unless additional contributions could be secured from other participating nations.

Military commanders on the ground have also consistently criticised the imposition of national caveats on the deployment of military forces, arguing that restrictions on the rules of engagement of certain countries' forces have undermined the overall effectiveness of the ISAF operation. At the NATO Summit in Riga in November 2006 NATO leaders did agree to remove a number (although not all) of the caveats on the operational use of personnel, including securing the commitment of all allies to come to the aid of forces that require assistance in an emergency situation. However, concerns remained over this compromise, in particular over what constituted the definition of "an emergency".

Since then further attempts to persuade some NATO countries to relax the caveats on operational deployment have achieved minimal success with concerns continuing to be expressed that 'undeclared' national caveats on the use of forces continue to hinder ISAF operations.<sup>26</sup> At the Bucharest Summit in April 2008 a general commitment to provide maximum flexibility to the ISAF force by restricting the use of national caveats was agreed, although no country-specific caveats were reportedly lifted.

To offset the concerns of some countries regarding the provision of additional forces to the ISAF mission, agreement was also reached at Bucharest on the concept of establishing a trust-fund scheme whereby countries would be able to offer equipment or financial contributions instead of sending forces. The UK was reported to have offered to contribute £5m to that fund.<sup>27</sup>

Despite these agreements however, in January 2009 the then British Defence Secretary, John Hutton, again publicly called on European NATO allies to "step up to the plate" and deploy more forces to Afghanistan. He argued that "freeloading on the back of US military security is not an option if we wish to be equal partners in this transatlantic alliance. Anyone who wants to benefit from collective security must be prepared to share the ultimate price".<sup>28</sup>

The early debate on force generation and national caveats is examined in more detail in [Library Standard Notes SN/IA/4143](#) and [SN/IA/4854](#).

## **2 Developments in 2009**

### **2.1 US 'Surge' and Election Support**

In mid-September 2008 the then US President George W. Bush announced that in tandem with a drawdown of forces in Iraq,<sup>29</sup> additional US military personnel would be deployed to Afghanistan in what was labelled a "quiet surge". That proposal was subsequently supported by the new US administration under President Barack Obama which ordered an overarching strategic review of US policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The conclusions of that review were subsequently published at the end of March 2009, a week before NATO's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit.

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<sup>26</sup> See "US general sees undeclared caveats in Afghanistan", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 May 2007

<sup>27</sup> See "Many pledges but few new troops for Afghanistan", *The Guardian*, 4 April 2008

<sup>28</sup> "Hutton tells NATO allies to 'step up to plate' over Afghanistan", *The Guardian*, 16 January 2009

<sup>29</sup> This is examined in Library Standard Note SN/IA/4845, [Coalition forces in Iraq: towards a drawdown?](#), 22 September 2008

The outcome of that review focused largely on building governance through political and economic means, including greater training and support for the Afghan National Security Forces. It did, however, also support the call for the deployment of an additional 21,000 US military personnel to the country during 2009 as part of measures to execute and resource “an integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan”. Military resources were prioritised for two missions:

- Securing Afghanistan’s south and east against a return to al Qaeda and its allies, to provide a space for the Afghan government to establish effective government control.
- Provide the Afghan security forces with the mentoring needed to expand rapidly, take the lead in effective counterinsurgency operations, and allow the US and its partners to wind down combat operations.

The review firmly stated that “our counter-insurgency strategy must integrate population security with building effective local governance and economic development. We will establish the security needed to provide space and time for stabilisation and reconstruction activities”.<sup>30</sup>

4,000 of those additional US personnel were earmarked for training the Afghan Security Forces; while at least 10,000 were identified for deployment into Helmand province, with the remainder deployed elsewhere in southern and south western Afghanistan.

At the NATO summit in April 2009 Allied leaders supported the principles of the new US ‘Af-Pak’ strategy, in particular those efforts to expand and enhance the capabilities of the ANSF. Despite concerns that calls for additional troops to be committed by NATO’s European states would be met with opposition an additional 5,000 personnel were pledged in order to support security efforts surrounding the presidential election in August 2009 and to shore up training of the ANSF. However a number of those additional forces had already been identified prior to the summit which led to some criticism among commentators. Of those personnel, 900 were committed by the UK, 500-600 from Spain, 500-660 from Italy, 600 Polish troops, 600 German personnel and 100 personnel from the Netherlands. A number of other countries, including Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Turkey and Slovakia also pledged extra trainers to work with the Afghan National Army and National Police. Belgium, Italy and Portugal also offered additional fighter and transport aircraft.

At the end of April 2009 Australia also announced that it would send an additional 450 military personnel to Afghanistan, including two additional operational mentor and liaison teams (100 personnel) and a 120-strong election support force; while the Estonian government approved a resolution to double the number of its troops deployed in the country until 1 December 2009 in order to cover the election period. Japan also announced that it would fund the salaries of the Afghan National Police, in its entirety, for a period of six months.

However, a number of countries, most notably France, refused to commit any more forces to ISAF amid growing domestic opposition to the Afghan operation.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report on US Policy Toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, March 2009

<sup>31</sup> See “Afghan lawsuit adds pressure for Sarkozy to agree troop withdrawal”, *The Times*, 30 October 2009

## 2.2 The McChrystal Report

Upon assuming command of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan in June 2009, General McChrystal embarked upon an assessment of Coalition strategy in the country. Based upon the overarching principles of the March 2009 'Af-Pak' strategy, the intention of the evaluation was to bring a fresh and comprehensive approach to the military campaign and chart a possible way forward. As US Defense Secretary Robert Gates commented at the beginning of September, "General McChrystal's response [is] intended to help us effectively implement the President's March strategy, not launch a new one".<sup>32</sup>

That report was presented to the President in September 2009 and having determined that "neither success nor failure can be taken for granted" and that the "overall situation is deteriorating", it called for "a revised implementation strategy, commitment and resolve and increased unity of effort".<sup>33</sup> Although its findings were confidential, its contents were subsequently leaked to the US media. While the report did not contain specific recommendations on the deployment of additional forces, the report did highlight two specific issues:

To execute the strategy, we must grow and improve the effectiveness of the Afghan National Security Forces and elevate the importance of governance.<sup>34</sup>

General McChrystal subsequently called for the establishment of a comprehensive counterinsurgency campaign that focuses on gaining the support of the population while "shielding them from insurgent violence, corruption and coercion". Specifically he called for a properly resourced strategy built on four main pillars:

- Improving effectiveness through greater partnering with the ANSF, by increasing the size and accelerating the growth of the ANSF and preparing them to take the lead in security operations. He called for the target strength of the ANA and ANP to be revised to 240,000 and 160,000 respectively.
- Prioritising responsive and accountable governance at all levels.
- Gaining the initiative from the insurgents and reversing their current momentum.
- Focusing available resources to those critical areas where vulnerable populations are most threatened.

He concluded that report by summarising:

Central to my analysis is a belief that we must respect the complexities of the operational environment and design our strategic approach accordingly. As we analyzed the situation, I became increasingly convinced of several themes: that the objective is the will of the people, our conventional warfare culture is part of the problem, the Afghans must ultimately defeat the insurgency, we cannot succeed without significantly improved unity of effort, and finally, that protecting the people means shielding them from *all* threats.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Department of Defense News Briefing, 3 September 2009

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/pressreleases/2009/08/pr090831-652.html>

<sup>34</sup> COMISAF's Initial Assessment, 30 August 2009. A leaked version of this report is available from *The Washington Post* at: [http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment\\_Redacted\\_092109.pdf](http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> COMISAF's Initial Assessment, 30 August 2009

Although General McChrystal's initial assessment did not specify additional force contributions, he did acknowledge that:

Our campaign in Afghanistan has been historically under-resourced and remains so today [...]

Ideally the ANSF must lead this fight, but they will not have enough capability in the near-term given the insurgency's growth rate. In the interim, coalition forces must provide a bridge capability to protect critical segments of the population. The status quo will lead to failure if we wait for the ANSF to grow.

The new strategy will improve effectiveness through better application of existing assets, but it also requires additional resources. Broadly speaking, we require more civilian and military resources, more ANSF, and more ISR and other enablers [...] Overall, ISAF requires an increase in the total coalition force capability and end-strength.<sup>36</sup>

In order to meet the objectives of his revised strategy, General McChrystal subsequently requested an additional 40,000 US forces be deployed to Afghanistan.

### **3 Discussions on the Way Forward**

The strategic review of US strategy in Afghanistan-Pakistan was undertaken in acknowledgement of the prevailing political and economic and military challenges facing the region and the general political mood for a new direction to be adopted in order that progress could be made. As such, 2009 and 2010 have been regarded as defining years for Afghanistan, with a new focus on strengthening governance and a fresh impetus to the military's counterinsurgency campaign.

However, the allegations of corruption that marred the Afghan Presidential elections in August 2009 and called into question the legitimacy of the new Karzai government; coupled with the unprecedented level of Coalition casualties in the country throughout 2009;<sup>37</sup> the emergence of several fledgling exit strategies by a number of troop contributing nations; and concerns over the status and capabilities of the Afghan security forces led many to question whether the new US approach remained credible. Several countries, including France, had already stated that they would not commit additional forces to the operation; while others, such as Canada had already set down a timetable for withdrawal. The establishment of such positions subsequently placed pressure on the US, and its main allies in Afghanistan including the UK, to consider redefining their strategy and either commit additional forces as per General McChrystal's request or deploy additional forces within the context of developing a more co-ordinated longer-term exit strategy for the Coalition as a whole.

In a speech to the Atlantic Council of the United States on 28 September 2009, the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen acknowledged:

I know that, despite everything we've already done, reaching our goal in Afghanistan is not guaranteed. Which brings me to my second point: we cannot simply continue doing exactly what we are doing now. Things are going to have to change.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> The number of British personnel killed in Afghanistan in 2009 is the highest since the Falklands Conflict in 1982.

The reasons are clear. Public support for this mission in troop-contributing countries is falling – because of rising casualties; because of concerns about the way the election was held; but most of all, because of a sense among many people that, despite all the progress, we aren't getting anywhere [...]

The reality is that this mission cannot continue forever. It should not continue forever. And our populations, Afghan and international, want to see light at the end of the tunnel. They want to see the beginning of transition to Afghan lead [...]

I believe that if we can show transition actually happening, our publics will continue to support this mission through to success. But I am convinced that if we do not clearly and concretely begin to move towards transition to Afghan lead, it will be impossible to sustain public support for this mission over the long term. Sooner rather than later, transition must begin.

But let no one spin this as a run for the exits. It is not. NATO will stay for as long as it takes to succeed... but that cannot mean forever. Which means we have to start doing things a little differently.<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, following a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Bratislava on 23 October<sup>39</sup> several Member States increasingly began to outline a strategy that would seek to strengthen local governance and the capabilities of the ANSF with a view to handing over control on a district-by-district basis beginning in 2010. In a speech to the Royal College of Defence Studies on 6 November<sup>40</sup> and again in an interview with *Today* programme on 13 November and in his annual speech to the Lord Mayor's Banquet on 16 November 2009, the then British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, subsequently outlined the basic framework for what many analysts regarded as the beginnings of a long-term exit strategy; one that placed greater emphasis on the establishment of local governance (in accordance with the US 'Af-Pak' strategy) as a means of underpinning security efforts in the country. On the *Today* programme the Prime Minister stated:

So we've got to have a strategy, therefore, which I conclude is the right one, and which I believe President Obama also supports, which is British troops will start coming home as we begin to show that the Afghan forces themselves – army, security forces, police, local government, district government – can actually run their own affairs, and they can resist the extreme terrorists who wish to take control of the country [...]

It's important that we do have these assurances that corruption will be dealt with, that local government will be strengthened.

Then we can pass, district by district, control over parts of Helmand to the Afghans themselves and that is the whole strategy, that we are not an occupying army, it's not like previous interventions in Afghanistan, we are actually creating the conditions in which the Afghans themselves, and not an occupying army, can run their own affairs.<sup>41</sup>

As part of those plans the UK indicated its intention to host an international conference in London at the end of January 2010 that would establish a comprehensive political framework for progress in Afghanistan, including measures for internal political reform, and one that would form the parameters within which the Coalition military strategy could be

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<sup>38</sup> Speech by the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, to the Atlantic Council of the United States, 28 September 2009

<sup>39</sup> NATO's statement on key priorities for Afghanistan is available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_58510.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_58510.htm)

<sup>40</sup> A copy of that speech is available at: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page21232>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=21174386>

accomplished. In his speech to the Lord Mayor's banquet the Prime Minister specifically stated that the conference should "identify a process for transferring district by district to full Afghan control and if at all possible set a timetable for transferring districts starting in 2010".<sup>42</sup>

In a speech to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on 17 November 2009 the then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, elaborated on the vision for that overarching political strategy, suggesting that three main strands needed to be addressed:

To be successful the political strategy must address three audiences. This is a war in the mind as well on the ground. First, the Afghan people and their loyalty: to reassure and mobilise citizens to resist the Taliban, military effort to improve security must be allied to civilian effort to improve governance especially at the local level. Second, the insurgents and their determination to fight: military pressure to beat back the insurgency must be combined with support to flip sides rather than fight or run away. Third, Afghanistan's neighbours: a new relationship must be forged between Afghanistan and its neighbours, based on the understanding that Afghanistan's future is not as a client of any, but as a secure country in its own right.<sup>43</sup>

In a statement on 19 November on the inauguration of President Karzai, the NATO Secretary General also acknowledged:

President Karzai has our best wishes for his second five-year term. We strongly support his intention to form a capable and inclusive administration, and to make it accountable, one in which corruption has no place. It is critically important that the Afghan people, and the citizens of the countries sending troops to the international mission, see concrete progress in this regard.

We are entering a time of transition. Afghans will increasingly take leadership of their own affairs. NATO, through the International Security Assistance Force, will work with the new Government to enable the Afghan National Security Forces to assume lead responsibility for their country's security, district by district, and province by province, when conditions permit.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.1 US position

The McChrystal report was presented to President Obama in September 2009. Contrary to the expectations of many, a swift response to those recommendations was not forthcoming. Many commentators had suggested that the administration was reluctant to commit additional resources when a further 21,000 US troops had only just been deployed to Afghanistan, arguing that there had not been enough time for those forces, and the new 'Af-Pak' strategy, to have an impact. Others suggested that the US was looking for progress by the new Karzai government on political reform and in particular the issue of corruption, before committing yet more forces and more money. Indeed an article in *The Times* on 4 November 2009 suggested that President Obama had given President Karzai an ultimatum on reducing corruption and committing to 'cleaning up' his government within six months, or risk losing US support.<sup>45</sup> The US envoy in Kabul, General Karl Eikenberry also reportedly advised President Obama against deploying a military surge until more evidence that the new Afghan government had tackled widespread corruption, was seen.<sup>46</sup> However, a number

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<sup>42</sup> Prime Minister's Speech on Foreign Policy at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, 16 November 2009: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page21339>. Kabul has been under Afghan control since 2008.

<sup>43</sup> A copy of the Foreign Secretary's full speech is available [online](#).

<sup>44</sup> Statement by the Secretary General: 19 November 2009

<sup>45</sup> "US gives Karzai six-month ultimatum to stem Afghanistan corruption", *The Times*, 4 November 2009

<sup>46</sup> "US Kabul envoy: no extra troops for Karzai", *Reuters*, 12 November 2009

of analysts raised the question of precisely how much leverage the US could expect to have over President Karzai, and what the longer term options would be if he failed to deliver on his commitment to be an effective partner.<sup>47</sup>

Rifts within the US administration, and Congress, over next steps in Afghanistan were subsequently widely reported. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, supported by a number of senior members of Congress including Senator John McCain, very publicly advocated a surge of US troops and a rapid increase in the size and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces.<sup>48</sup> A growing number of Democrats in Congress stated, however, that they would oppose further troop deployments amid decreasing public support for the conflict. Senator John Kerry, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a veteran of the Vietnam War, warned against repeating the mistakes of Vietnam and said that the United States needed to have a clear exit strategy. Senator Kerry said that he had not made up his mind about the troop build-up, but that in Vietnam “the underlying assumptions were flawed, and the number of troops weren’t going to make a difference”.<sup>49</sup>

As a result of diverging military and political opinion, a number of options were subsequently put on the table: deploying the full contingent of 40,000 requested by General McChrystal; deploying a smaller contingent of either 20,000 or 30,000 personnel (the latter option reportedly supported by US Defense Secretary Robert Gates) or sending between 10-15,000 troops who would focus on training ANSF personnel. However, it was the deployment of additional forces without a clear exit strategy that was understood to have been the main sticking point and the source of the administration’s reluctance to set out its position. The unwillingness of the US administration to respond to General McChrystal’s recommendations prompted many observers to accuse President Obama of ‘dithering’ and undermining efforts to present a coherent and co-ordinated Coalition strategy in the country. Former US Vice president Dick Cheney accused the White House of indecision suggesting that such signals out of Washington “hurt our allies and embolden our adversaries”. He called on President Obama to “do what it takes to win a war he [Obama] has repeatedly and rightly called a war of necessity”.<sup>50</sup>

### ***The new US Surge***

After nearly three months of deliberation, President Obama set out his new strategy for Afghanistan during a speech to the West Point Military Academy on 1 December 2009.

In summary, that strategy envisaged:<sup>51</sup>

- The deployment of 30,000 additional US forces in Afghanistan in the first six months of 2010.
- Those forces would target the insurgency, secure key population centres and increase the Coalition’s ability to train and partner the ANSF more effectively in order to help

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<sup>47</sup> Also see the Prime Minister’s interview on the *Today* programme, 13 November 2009

<sup>48</sup> See “President Obama’s top military adviser exposes Afghanistan rifts”, *The Times*, 16 September 2009

<sup>49</sup> “Plan to boost Afghan forces splits Obama advisers”, *New York Times*, 26 September 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/27/world/asia/27military.html>

<sup>50</sup> “Cheney tells Obama to ‘stop dithering’”, *The Independent*, 22 October 2009

<sup>51</sup> A copy of the President’s speech is available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

create the conditions for the eventual transfer of security responsibility to the Afghans within three years.

- The withdrawal of US forces starting in July 2011; although no date for the complete withdrawal of US forces was set out. President Obama stated “Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground. We’ll continue to advise and assist Afghanistan’s security forces to ensure that they can succeed over the long haul”.
- A more effective civilian strategy so that the government can take advantage of improved security; and a more effective partnership with Pakistan.

The additional US forces are likely to comprise two or three more brigade combat teams and a brigade-sized element of approximately 4,000 personnel committed to embedding with and training the ANSF.

The additional US forces will bring the US contingent on the ground in Afghanistan to nearly 100,000.<sup>52</sup> In evidence to the Senate Armed Services Committee on 2 December, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Mike Mullen stated the plan “Gets the most US force into the fight as quickly as possible, giving General McChrystal everything he needs in 2010 to gain the initiative”.<sup>53</sup> An article in *The Times* on 2 December 2009 also suggested that:

President Karzai of Afghanistan has been told in the clearest terms that the plan is also heavily contingent on his performance. He must drop corrupt ministers and governors and institute real reforms within a Government that is at present viewed as a deeply unreliable partner. Mr Karzai has also been told that Mr Obama is holding the option to delay or halt troop deployments if his Government does not meet specific benchmarks, or targets, both on the political and military fronts.<sup>54</sup>

However, the President’s plans were not met with widespread support. Support within Congress had been mixed, with a number of Senators from across both parties suggesting that they would try to block the authorisation of funding, estimated at \$30bn, for the surge of US forces into Afghanistan. House Majority Leader, Steny Hoyer, stated that “Many House Democrats have great reservations about increasing the U.S. effort and significant concern about whether or not we can be successful”.<sup>55</sup>

Senior Republican Senator John McCain, among others, also criticised the inclusion of a target date for withdrawal stating that “we need to make it clear to the enemy that we’re going to succeed and we are going to stay as long as necessary to succeed”.<sup>56</sup> Lord Paddy Ashdown also commented:

What the President intended was for audiences in the US and Afghanistan to hear different things. His message to the domestic audience was supposed to be “troops home in 18 months” and to the Taliban “30,000 extra troops”. My worry is that the wrong people got the wrong message. What the US heard was “30,000 more troops” while what the Taliban heard was “in 18 months, they’ll be gone”.

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<sup>52</sup> US forces in Iraq, at their peak, totalled approximately 160,000

<sup>53</sup> Department of Defense Press Release, 2 December 2009

<sup>54</sup> “President Obama invokes memory of 9/11 as he outlines vision for Afghan war”, *The Times*, 2 December 2009

<sup>55</sup> See “Obama’s Afghanistan plan sparks democratic scepticism”, *Bloomberg*, 1 December 2009

<sup>56</sup> “Italy to send 1,000 extra troops to Afghanistan”, *BBC News Online*, 3 December 2009

The Taliban commander Mullah Omar once famously said “they may have the watches, but we have the time”. I fear we may have inadvertently given volume to that message. I understand the temptation of timelines and exit strategies for those who have to win domestic support. But they also tell our enemies how long they have to wait before we give up.

It is far better to deal with these things through milestones rather than timelines. For instance we could set milestones for the growth and professionalization of the Afghan Army and police, set target times for them to be delivered and, as they are, hand over functions to Afghan structures and pull out as we do so.<sup>57</sup>

The Foreign Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, Con Coughlin also argued that “to believe this deeply complex and challenging conflict can be turned around in just 18 months is wildly optimistic, if not naive”.<sup>58</sup>

However, in testimony to the US Congress, US administration officials, including the US Defense Secretary, sought to highlight that that timeline for departure “is not set in stone” and any timetable for an eventual pull-out was flexible. A review of the process is expected to be undertaken in December 2010.<sup>59</sup> The US Ambassador to the UK, Louis Susman, also commented:

The plan has not been completely understood. Everyone has signed off but this is not an open-ended commitment and the withdrawal is subject to reviewing conditions on the ground. Some people think this is the wrong approach ... but we have to create a sense of urgency for the Afghan government to get its act together.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed President Obama in his speech clearly stated that “it must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security, and that America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan”.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.2 British Position**

On 14 October 2009 the then Prime Minister committed additional forces to the Afghan operation, but specified that any further additional troop contributions would depend on the commitment of the Afghan government to develop its own security forces and equitable burden sharing among Coalition allies. In a Statement to the House on 30 November, the Government announced that those conditions had been met and that a further 500 personnel would subsequently deploy to Afghanistan in early December. In addition to Special Forces operating in the country the UK’s total commitment now stands at just over 10,000 personnel.<sup>62</sup>

As outlined above the UK has been influential in pushing for a more comprehensive political strategy for Afghanistan to be established, which would encompass and support the military campaign. As part of those moves the UK has welcomed the US decision to deploy

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<sup>57</sup> Paddy Ashdown, “Barack Obama’s plan is seriously flawed. We need more”, *The Times*, 4 December 2009

<sup>58</sup> “Barack Obama’s new Afghan strategy is high risk and wildly optimistic”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 December 2009

<sup>59</sup> “US says Afghan pullout date not fixed”, *Defence Talk*, 3 December 2009

<sup>60</sup> “US ambassador says Afghanistan withdrawal date may not be rigid”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 2009

<sup>61</sup> A copy of the President’s speech is available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

<sup>62</sup> HC Deb 30 November 2009, c831-836

additional surge forces which the then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, has suggested will ensure that “a full-scale counter-insurgency against the Taliban is possible”.<sup>63</sup>

However, the possibility of handing over control in areas such as Helmand province in 2010 as part of that new strategy has been met with scepticism by many analysts who have argued that the proposals are “unrealistic”.<sup>64</sup> The then Shadow Foreign Secretary, William Hague, cautioned over the dangers of setting a timetable in a debate in the House of Commons on 23 November, asking “Do Ministers agree that it is not possible to have a timetable in a province such as Helmand, which would set a timetable for the Taliban to work to, as well as everyone else?”.<sup>65</sup> While others have argued that it would take at least 5 years to achieve the right political and military conditions for handing over security responsibility. The Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Jock Stirrup, commented on 8 November 2009:

The key is when will the Afghan National Army be able to take the lead on security across the country?

I'd say about 2014. It's another four or five years but it will be a gradual process. Over time the Afghans will be taking more and more responsibility.<sup>66</sup>

A number of military and political figures have previously argued that the UK presence in Afghanistan could feasibly last for decades. The then British Ambassador to Kabul, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, suggested in an interview with the *Today* programme in June 2007 that Britain's commitment to Afghanistan was “likely to last for decades”;<sup>67</sup> while in August 2007 Brigadier John Lorimer, then Commander of UK forces in Helmand province, suggested that British forces could remain on the ground for over 30 years:

If you look at the insurgency then it could take maybe 10 years. Counter-narcotics, it's 30 years. If you're looking at governance and so on, it looks a little longer. If you look at other counter-insurgency operations over the last 100 years then it has taken time.<sup>68</sup>

In September 2008 the then outgoing British Commander of forces in Afghanistan, Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith, also argued that the Taliban-led insurgency “is a generational problem” that “will take 10 to 15 years to change, and we will need to be here”.<sup>69</sup>

More recently General Sir David Richards, prior to taking up his appointment as Chief of the General Staff in August 2009, commented in an interview with *The Times* that “the Army's role will evolve but the whole process might take as long as 30 to 40 years”. However, he sought to emphasise that British troop involvement “should only be needed for the medium term” and that in the longer term the UK's commitment would be more focused on development, governance and security sector reform. He went on to conclude that the focus must now be on the expansion of the ANA and ANP, stating that “just as in Iraq, it is our route out militarily”.<sup>70</sup> In comments to the BBC in October 2009 General Richards appeared to provide more clarity of what might be considered ‘medium term’ troop involvement by suggesting that British troops will need to be based in Afghanistan for another five years. He stated that:

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<sup>63</sup> “Miliband says US troop surge will help calm Afghanistan”, *BBC News Online*, 1 December 2009

<sup>64</sup> “Britain to train 10,000 more Afghan troops to speed up withdrawal”, *The Times*, 10 November 2009

<sup>65</sup> HC Deb 23 November 2009, c275

<sup>66</sup> “Sir Jock Stirrup: British will be fighting Taliban for five more years”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 2009

<sup>67</sup> “We'll be in Afghanistan for decades”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 2007

<sup>68</sup> “Afghan victory could take 38 years”, *The Observer*, 5 August 2007

<sup>69</sup> “Afghanistan troops must double”, *Sky News*, 24 September 2008

<sup>70</sup> “General Sir David Richards: Afghanistan will take 40 years”, *the Times*, 8 August 2009

If we get it right, our estimation is that by about 2011, 2012 we'll see an appreciable improvement, and by about 2014 we will ramp down our numbers as they ramp up and you'll start to reduce the overall risks of the operation.

It is an ambitious target, which is why... I caveated slightly by saying I'm expecting Nato to ask us to put more into the training pot to allow that force to grow more aggressively.

But if I'm half-right we've got five years of declining violence as we get that formula right and then we'll go into what might be called a supporting role.<sup>71</sup>

While welcoming the surge of US forces announced on 1 December 2009, both the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Chief of the General Staff reiterated the military view that British forces will remain in Afghanistan for another five years despite the suggestion that US forces would be to withdraw in 2011.<sup>72</sup> Sir Jock Stirrup commented:

What we have said is that from a military perspective our objective is to get the Afghan National Security Forces into the lead in this counter-insurgency operation.

I think 2014 is a more realistic target, but of course that's not a step change in 2014, that will be happening gradually between now and then.

So by 2011, I certainly believe that we will be seeing a significant change in the balance between the leadership of these combat operations between ISAF troops and the Afghan National Security Forces.<sup>73</sup>

However, calls for British forces to be withdrawn from Afghanistan have also continued to be made among several commentators. The then Chair of Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee, Dr Kim Howells, argued at the beginning of November 2009 that a swift withdrawal of British forces should be undertaken allowing resources to be concentrated on counter-terrorism measures in the UK. Writing in *The Guardian* Dr Howells commented that:

It would be better to bring home the great majority of our fighting men and women and concentrate, instead, on using the money saved to secure our own borders, gather intelligence on terrorist activities inside Britain.<sup>74</sup>

While Sir Christopher Meyer, former British Ambassador to Washington, has suggested that the campaign in Afghanistan is "futile", "serves no conceivable national interest" and "is a waste of blood and treasure".<sup>75</sup>

### 3.3 Position of Coalition Allies

For the longer term, the deployment of Canadian and Dutch ISAF forces in the southern provinces has been secured until at least mid 2010-2011. The Canadian House of Commons voted by 198-177 on 13 March 2008 to support the extension of the Canadian deployment for a further two and a half years. In the longer term Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has however pledged to withdraw most of Canada's contingent in the country when their current mandate ends in 2011. In November 2009 the Canadian Chief of the Defense Staff, General Walter Natynczyk, reportedly ordered that preparations get under way for the

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<sup>71</sup> "Afghan troop reduction by 2014", *BBC News Online*, 22 October 2009

<sup>72</sup> "Armed Forces heads Sir Jock Stirrup and Sir David Richards warn over Obama's 2011 withdrawal", *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 2009

<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Defence press release, 2 December 2009

<sup>74</sup> "Labour splits over Afghanistan war strategy", *The Guardian*, 3 November 2009

<sup>75</sup> Sir Christopher Meyer, *Getting our Way*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009

withdrawal of Canadian forces from southern Afghanistan from the summer of 2011.<sup>76</sup> In June 2010 the Canadian air force also confirmed that it was planning to withdraw all of its helicopters based in Afghanistan in August 2011, following the end of Canada's combat mission in the country.<sup>77</sup>

In December 2007 the Dutch Parliament also approved the extension of its mandate until August 2010, with a view to complete withdrawal by the end of the year. Throughout this period the Dutch contingent is expected to remain deployed in Uruzgan province.<sup>78</sup> Despite further calls for additional troops, the Australian Defence Minister, John Faulkner, also stated in October that the government was examining how best to complete Australia's mission in Uruzgan province in "the shortest timeframe possible" and that discussion about possible exit strategies had been underway since early 2009.<sup>79</sup>

Although the new NATO military strategy envisages incrementally handing over control to Afghan forces starting in 2010, it remains debatable whether the security situation on the ground in Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces where Canadian, Dutch and Australian forces are based, will have progressed to the point where a handover of control could be achieved within these timeframes for withdrawal. Political pressure on these countries to retain their force levels in southern Afghanistan beyond 2010/2011 is considered far more likely in order to avoid demands on the US and possibly the UK, to fill the breach.<sup>80</sup> However, it has been noted that if the Netherlands proceeds with its withdrawal plans in the second half of 2010 that will have important consequences, "not least because it will encourage Canada to press ahead with withdrawal from the NATO mission in 2011".<sup>81</sup> Indeed, recent discussions within the Canadian administration are reported to be firmly behind the withdrawal of forces within the timeframe already set out. Domestic political support for retaining a Canadian non-combat presence in Afghanistan beyond 2011 is increasing however. A Canadian Senate report warned at the end of June 2010 that Canada's standing among its allies could suffer if it was to withdraw the entirety of its forces in 2011.

Japan also withdrew its naval contingent, deployed in the Indian Ocean in support of the ISAF operation, in January 2010.<sup>82</sup> Although small, that contribution had been regarded as controversial given Japan's domestic approach to the military since the end of the Second World War. Japan is, however, one of the largest donors of international reconstruction aid in Afghanistan and recently committed to funding the salaries of the ANP for a period of six months.

Despite several incidents between German forces and Taliban insurgents in the northern region of Kunduz in the latter half of 2009, the German Bundestag voted to extend the mandate of the Afghan mission on 3 December for a further year to the end of 2010. In spite of concerns that the insurgency is increasing in the northern region the Bundestag maintained Germany's force contribution at its cap of 4,500 with its forces continuing to be based in the north and subject to the same rules of engagement. Foreign Minister, Guido

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<sup>76</sup> "Canada plans Afghan withdrawal", *Time Magazine*, 6 November 2009

<sup>77</sup> "Air force to pull helicopters in 2011", *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 June 2010

<sup>78</sup> See "The Netherlands extends mission in Afghanistan", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 5 December 2007

<sup>79</sup> "Australia seeks early pull out from Afghanistan", *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 October 2009

<sup>80</sup> Similar issues arose in Iraq in 2004 after Spain and several other countries withdrew their forces from Multinational Division (Centre South) and Italy, which had the fourth largest contingent in Iraq at the time, withdrew its forces from the British-led region of MND (SE) over the course of 2006.

<sup>81</sup> "Afghans warn Dutch over pull-out", *The Financial Times*, 24 November 2009

<sup>82</sup> Japan has a supply ship and a destroyer deployed to provide fuel and water to US and British naval vessels in the Indian Ocean.

Westerwelle, had previously acknowledged that the government was seeking a framework for the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan “to become visible” within the lifetime of the current Bundestag which is due to end in 2013. In a press conference on 18 November he stated:

We don't want Afghanistan to be a mission that lasts for ever and ever. We want to push on with a plan for self-sustained security. We want a responsible handover, and we want a handover for responsibility in Afghanistan itself. In accordance with this, we want to get to the point during the current parliament where the prospect of a handover becomes visible.<sup>83</sup>

In contrast, a number of other countries have committed to sending more troops, in particular personnel to train the Afghan National Security Forces. In September 2009 Turkey committed to the deployment of additional 805 troops when it assumed the regional command of Kabul at the end of November; which doubled its contingent in the country. However, those extra forces will not conduct combat operations but will train the ANA.

Spain has also confirmed that it will increase its presence in the country by 220 personnel, although at the same time the Spanish government suggested that it would be “reasonable to expect Afghanistan to provide its own security in five years so that foreign forces can be withdrawn”.<sup>84</sup>

### **Supporting the US Surge**

In a speech to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on 17 November 2009 the NATO Secretary General once again called on the Alliance's Member States to commit additional forces to the ISAF operation:

I want to use this opportunity to strongly encourage you, and your governments, to make more military resources available – extra combat forces for ISAF; extra troops for enhanced partnership and teaming with the Afghan National Security Forces; and extra troops for training, particularly through the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan.

I firmly believe that we can continue to make progress – significant progress - if we can close the gap between the resources which the Commander of ISAF currently has available, and those he actually requires to do his job.<sup>85</sup>

That call was reiterated following the announcement that further US forces would be deployed in 2010, with suggestions that the US and the NATO Secretary General were looking for NATO Allies to provide the remaining 10,000 personnel requested by General McChrystal. In a statement on 2 December the NATO Secretary General highlighted:

This is not just America's war, this is an Alliance mission... at this very important moment, NATO must demonstrate its unity and its strength once again.<sup>86</sup>

He went on to comment that “in 2010, the non-US members of this mission will send at least 5,000 more soldiers and probably more”.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> “Germany eyes Afghan exit road map by 2013”, *Reuters News*, 18 November 2009

<sup>84</sup> “Five year timeline for Afghan troop exit is ‘reasonable’: Spain”, *Agence France Presse*, 9 September 2009

<sup>85</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_59214.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_59214.htm)

<sup>86</sup> NATO press release, 2 December 2009

<sup>87</sup> *ibid*

Whether individual Member states will in reality meet that aim remains to be seen. As outlined above, domestic political opposition to the operation in many countries has already prompted some troop contributing nations, such as Canada, the Netherlands and Australia, to consider or outline potential withdrawal strategies. Despite reports that the US had asked France to commit a further 1,500 troops to Afghanistan, President Sarkozy stated that the government has no plans to increase its commitment.<sup>88</sup> Other nations, such as Denmark, indicated at a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers on 23 October 2009, that they would not increase troop contributions until the new Afghan government had proved its commitment to NATO objectives on political reform and corruption.

Many others suggested that they would re-evaluate their positions after the US administration had set out its long-awaited response to the McChrystal report. Indeed, in the aftermath of President Obama's speech on 1 December both Poland and Italy offered to send an additional 600 and 1,000 reinforcements in 2010 respectively. Half of the Italian contingent was however understood to already be in the country, temporarily deployed for election support. The Italian government also indicated that those additional forces would be withdrawn in 2013. Georgia and South Korea, which are not in NATO also offered to deploy a contingent of 1,000 and 500 personnel respectively.

However, the response across the rest of NATO's European allies was generally regarded as one of reluctance. NATO Foreign Ministers discussed the direction of strategy in Afghanistan and any possible additional troop commitments at a meeting on 4 December 2009. A Statement by participating ISAF nations at the end of that meeting commented:

The transition to Afghan lead on security is an objective we share with the Afghan government. We will urgently step up our efforts to empower the Afghan authorities and help them take over further security responsibilities. The transfer of lead security responsibility in Kabul was a first step and further transfers will happen as conditions across the country allow. We are therefore investing more in training, equipping and sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces, through the NATO Training Mission, to build Afghan capacity. Our mission will be accomplished when Afghan forces can secure their own country; the Training Mission and donations to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund will help bring that day closer.

We endorse the underlying thrust of the assessment made by General McChrystal in August on how best to deliver our strategy in Afghanistan. We strongly welcome President Obama's announcement that the United States will provide substantial additional troops and resources for this purpose. We also welcome the additional contributions announced recently and the fact that many other ISAF nations are, or will be increasing their military and civilian contributions in Afghanistan. All this reflects our determination and commitment to provide the resources essential for the success of the ISAF mission.<sup>89</sup>

The NATO Secretary General cautioned, at the time however, that details on any further contributions may not be announced until after the conference on Afghanistan in London on 28 January 2010.

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<sup>88</sup> In mid-October 2009 President Sarkozy stated that France would not send "a single soldier more" to fight in Afghanistan (<http://www.france24.com/en/20091015-france-president-nicolas-sarkozy-interview-no-extra-troops-afghanistan>). Plus, see "US asks France for 1,500 more troops for Afghanistan", *Daily Telegraph*, 30 November 2009 and "Poland leads the way with pledge of 600 more troops for Afghanistan", *The Times*, 3 December 2009

<sup>89</sup> Statement on Afghanistan by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nations participating in ISAF, 4 December 2009

### 3.4 London Conference – January 2010

As outlined above, the intention of the London conference was to establish a comprehensive political framework for progress in Afghanistan, including measures for internal political reform that would provide the overarching framework for the Coalition's military strategy. It was widely expected that the conference would give formal approval to the plans and proposals that have been circulating among Coalition allies since September 2009, including the strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces and the steady withdrawal of Coalition troops over the longer term.

From a security perspective, therefore, the London Conference:

- Welcomed the intention of the Afghan National Security Forces to take the lead and conduct the majority of operations in the insecure areas of Afghanistan within three years and take responsibility for physical security within five years.
- Committed to improving the capabilities and effectiveness of the ANSF, including the phased growth and expansion of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police to 171,600 and 134,000 personnel respectively, by October 2011.<sup>90</sup>
- Welcomed the decision to establish, by the time of the Kabul conference, a plan for the phased transition of Afghan security on a province-by-province basis, including the conditions on which transition will be based. A number of provinces will transition to an Afghan lead, providing conditions are met, by late 2010/early 2011, with ISAF moving toward a supporting role within those provinces.
- Urged international partners to meet the outstanding requirement for trainers and mentoring teams for the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan, and reinforce and provide logistical support to the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan, especially in the provinces.<sup>91</sup>
- Welcomed the intention of the Government of Afghanistan to develop a National Security Policy outlining the security infrastructure and roles and responsibilities of the differing security agencies, which will be presented at the Kabul conference.

Controversially, the conference also expressed support for a reintegration plan for the Taliban proposed by the Afghan government, including the establishment of a £500m Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund in order to finance that plan. The conference also established a number of other political and economic measures as part of the new overarching framework.<sup>92</sup>

Around the London conference discussions, several states also outlined further commitments of both military and civilian personnel, in addition to further development assistance. Spain outlined its to deploy a further 500 troops to ISAF; while Poland set out its commitment to strengthening its contingent by 600 personnel and earmarking a possible 400 reserve troops for deployment in support of any future elections. Poland had, however, already indicated in

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<sup>90</sup> These targets were agreed by the joint Coordination and Monitoring Board on 20 January 2010. This will take the overall number of ANSF personnel to over 300,000.

<sup>91</sup> On 1 February 2010 the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, suggested that a further 100 police training units and 21 army training units are needed in Afghanistan ("NATO Chief presses for more police trainers in Afghanistan", *EU Observer*, 1 February 2010)

<sup>92</sup> Those measures are not discussed here. However, a copy of the Conference Communiqué is available online at: <http://afghanistan.hmg.gov.uk/en/conference/communique>

December 2009 that it would deploy these additional troops in support of the US surge. Contrary to expectations, and in the face of significant domestic political opposition, Germany also announced that it would deploy an additional 500 personnel to Afghanistan; while retaining a further 350 personnel in reserve in Germany for potential deployment should it prove necessary. Bulgaria also announced it would deploy an additional 100 training personnel before the end of 2010; while Colombia, Finland, Georgia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Greece also committed to strengthening their contributions. Japan and Luxembourg also pledged \$11m and €4m respectively for the ANA Trust Fund.<sup>93</sup>

Despite the tentative five-year timeline for transitioning security responsibilities, Afghan President Hamid Karzai argued, however, that the process of handing over security to the ANSF could take up to 15 years and cautioned against a hasty withdrawal.

A further conference to assess progress and set out more detailed plans for implementation of the political plan is due to be held in Kabul in July 2010.

In a Statement to the House on 1 February 2010, the then Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, welcomed the outcomes of the London conference although he went on to reiterate that:

This political strategy and the agreements reached on Thursday need to be pursued with drive, determination and without delay. The Afghan Government will host a further conference in Kabul later this spring. By then, President Karzai will need to have made real progress on security, governance and development.

The international community also has an important role to play in ensuring effective implementation. That is why three new international appointments are being made: at the UN, where there is an upgraded Senior Representative; in NATO, where the NATO Secretary-General has created a new NATO Senior Civilian Representative to strengthen the co-ordination of development and governance work with the military effort—our ambassador in Kabul, Mark Sedwill, took up this role on Thursday—and in the EU to create greater unity of civilian command.<sup>94</sup>

On the issue of reintegration, Mr Miliband also expressed the government's support for this plan:

President Karzai is launching a peace and reintegration programme for those who can be persuaded to switch sides; the rest will face growing military danger. It is essential that all the ethnic groups of Afghanistan are given a route back into Afghan society, as long as they respect the Afghan constitution and break links with al-Qaeda—we support all effort towards this goal. The Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund announced last Thursday is the vehicle through which the international community will provide financial assistance, and some \$140 million has already been pledged for the first year.<sup>95</sup>

In comments to the media following the London conference, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, also supported the plans for security transition and reintegration of the Taliban, but sought to make clear that “this is not an exit strategy. It is about assisting and partnering with the Afghans”. She also went on to comment that “the kinds of reforms that President Karzai

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<sup>93</sup> Information on the additional contributions to policing and development assistance that were made, is available at: <http://afghanistan.hmg.gov.uk/en/conference/contributions>

<sup>94</sup> HC Deb 1 February 2010, c25

<sup>95</sup> HC Deb 1 February 2010, c24

and the Afghan Government have announced are important and we're going to watch them carefully and make clear our expectations that they be fulfilled".<sup>96</sup>

## 4 Recent Developments

### 4.1 Resignation of General McChrystal

In June 2010 General McChrystal resigned as Commander of ISAF and Head of US Forces in Afghanistan following the publication of an article in [Rolling Stone](#) magazine in which he criticised the Obama administration. President Obama accepted his resignation suggesting that "his behaviour did not meet the standard for a commanding general". Given the key role played by General McChrystal in formulating the current Coalition strategy in Afghanistan, President Obama went on to emphasise that "this is a change in personnel but this is not a change in policy" and expressed support for pursuing a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy.<sup>97</sup> Following a confirmation hearing in the US Senate, General David Petraeus subsequently assumed ISAF and USFOR-A command on 4 July 2010. On assuming command he stated:

As President Obama and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen have noted, my assumption of command represents a change in personnel, not a change in policy or strategy.

To be sure, I will, as any new commander should, together with ISAF, Afghan and diplomatic partners, examine our civil-military effort to determine where refinements might be needed.<sup>98</sup>

NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, also confirmed the full support of the alliance following the appointment of General Petraeus:

We will all continue the current strategy to take on the Taliban politically and militarily in their heartland; to gradually transfer lead security responsibility to the Afghans; and to help the Government of Afghanistan in providing good governance and delivering basic services to the Afghan people.<sup>99</sup>

Commentators have expressed concern, however, that changing the command of ISAF, for the third time in as many years, during a defining period for current operations could prove detrimental to the overall mission. Central to those concerns is the perception of a lack of unity in Washington over the strategy in Afghanistan, and the relationship between the Coalition and Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who is widely acknowledged to have had a close working relationship with General McChrystal. Following the publication of the article, President Karzai expressed his support for General McChrystal and concern that "a leadership change could be harmful to ISAF operations".<sup>100</sup> Given General Petraeus's previous role as Head of US Central Command, US Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, supported his appointment stating that "he was satisfied that General Petraeus already had a personal relationship with key Afghan figures, the Pakistani military leadership ISAF brigade commanders and with the overall campaign plan and current operations".<sup>101</sup> Given that

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<sup>96</sup> Secretary Clinton's remarks at the International Conference on Afghanistan, 28 January 2010

<sup>97</sup> "McChrystal replaced by Petraeus as ISAF chief", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 June 2010

<sup>98</sup> Ministry of Defence press release, 5 July 2010

<sup>99</sup> NATO press release, 1 July 2010

<sup>100</sup> *ibid*

<sup>101</sup> "ISAF strategy to continue under new commander", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 June 2010

General Petraeus was also the architect of the counter-insurgency surge strategy in Iraq in 2007, several commentators have also expressed the view that he is “likely to pick up ISAF’s population-centric strategy right where General McChrystal left off”.<sup>102</sup> Professor Michael Clarke of RUSI noted:

The McChrystal plan, whoever implements it, remains the only game that can be played in Afghanistan if the country is to arrive at some sustainable outcome based on a Karzai government that includes a national reconciliation strategy.

The plan has not gone adrift. It has had a bad patch and there is a serious danger of political disarray instead of resolve in backing it up. But if the long term future of Afghanistan is unknowable, the medium term plan still remains achievable. The short term bad news is certainly not good, but there is no reason yet to regard it as other than short term.<sup>103</sup>

#### **4.2 Current Multinational Forces**

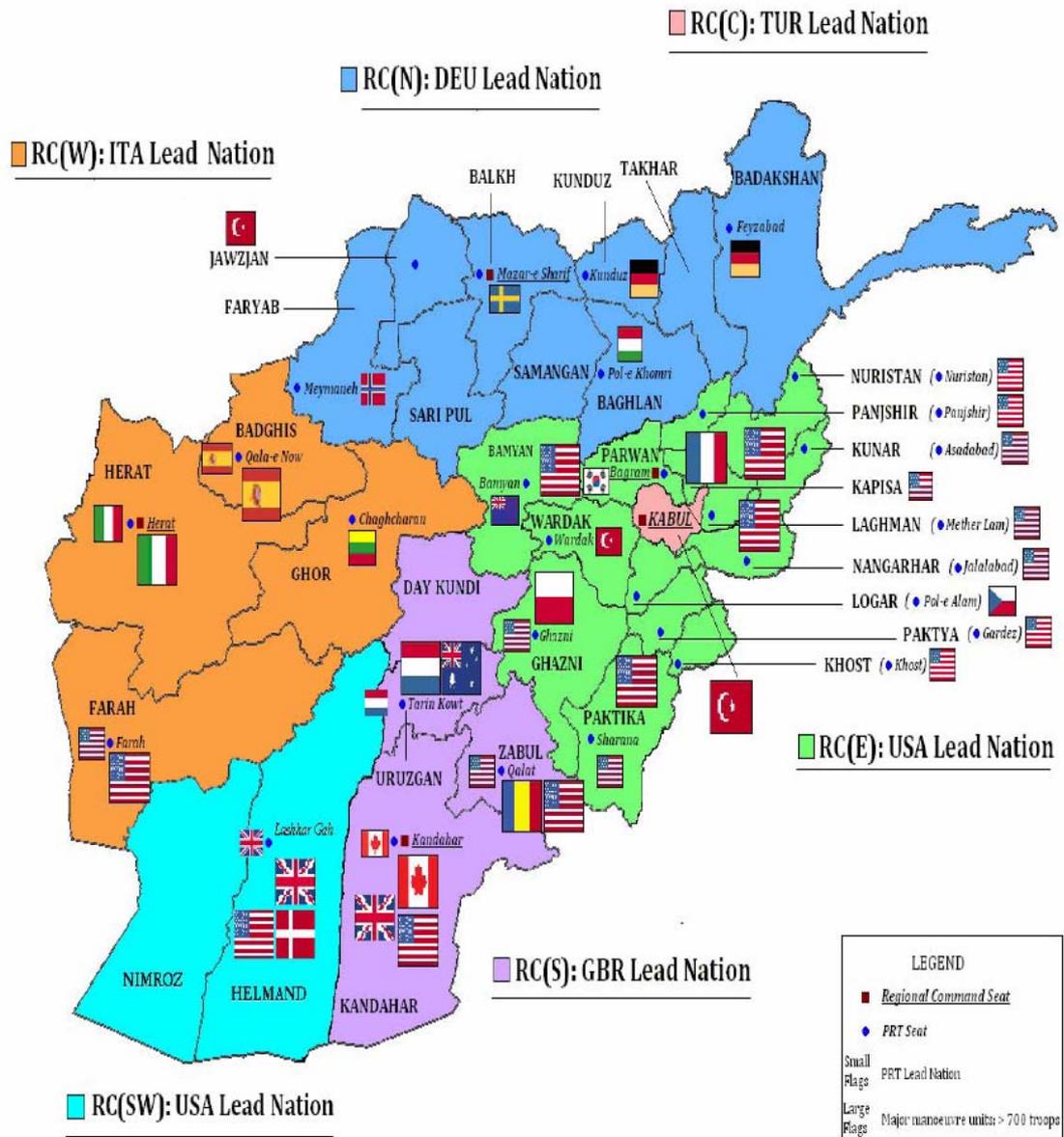
As of 6 July 2010 there were approximately 119,745 military personnel deployed as part of ISAF, from 46 contributing nations. Those military personnel are divided among the six ISAF Regional Commands and thus have security responsibility for specific geographical areas:

- **Regional Command Capital** – Approximately 5,000 personnel, largely from Turkey, Spain and France.
- **Regional Command North** – Approximately 11,000 personnel largely from Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Norway and Turkey.
- **Regional Command West** – Approximately 6,000 personnel largely from Italy, Spain, Lithuania and the United States.
- **Regional Command South** – Approximately 35,000 military personnel largely from Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, Romania and the United States. This figure will continue to grow as additional US forces continue to arrive in theatre over the first half of 2010. The UK continues to maintain command responsibility for RC South.
- **Regional Command South West** – Approximately 27,000 military personnel largely from the US, UK, Denmark, Bahrain, Georgia and Estonia. The majority of British military personnel are deployed in RC South West.
- **Regional Command East** – Approximately 32,000 ISAF personnel largely from the United States, Czech Republic, New Zealand, and Turkey.

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<sup>102</sup> “Afghan sitrep”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 30 June 2010

Those force locations, according to PRT, are as follows:



Source: ISAF Headquarters, 6 July 2010

The broad contribution of each nation is currently as follows:

Albania	250	Germany	4400	Poland	2500
Armenia	75	Greece	75	Portugal	265
Australia	1550	Hungary	345	Romania	1140
Austria	3	Iceland	3	Singapore	40
Azerbaijan	90	Ireland	7	Slovakia	290

<sup>103</sup> "A bad week for Afghan strategists", *RUSI Commentary*, 24 June 2010

Belgium	585	Italy	3300	Slovenia	75
Bosnia & Herzegovina	10	Jordan	6	Spain	1470
Bulgaria	525	Republic of Korea	0	Sweden	500
Canada	2830	Latvia	170	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	240
Croatia	280	Lithuania	245	Turkey	1710
Czech Republic	420	Luxembourg	9	Ukraine	10
Denmark	750	Mongolia	40	United Arab Emirates	15
Estonia	160	Montenegro	30	United Kingdom	9500
Finland	115	Netherlands	1955	United States	78430
France	3750	New Zealand	155		
Georgia	925	Norway	500	Total	119745

Source: ISAF Headquarters, 6 July 2010

At present over half of the countries contributing to ISAF operate with national caveats that restrict or prohibit certain actions (such as counter narcotics operations for example) or operations in specific geographical locations, without national consent. Currently 22 troop contributing nations are “caveat free”.<sup>104</sup>

### **British Forces in ISAF**

In April 2009 the then Prime Minister announced that a further 700 British personnel would temporarily deploy to Afghanistan for the period of the Presidential election, taking the total number of British personnel deployed in the country to 9,000.<sup>105</sup> Forces were expected to be deployed until the autumn of 2009, after which force levels would return to approximately 8,300 personnel.<sup>106</sup> However, the government also made it clear that force levels would continue to be kept under review.

On 14 October 2009 the Prime Minister subsequently announced that the UK would deploy 9,000 personnel in Afghanistan on “an enduring basis”. He also went on to state that UK force levels would be increased, in principle, to 9,500 personnel provided that certain conditions were met, namely:

A new Afghan government demonstrate their commitment to bring forward the Afghan forces to be trained and to fight alongside our forces [...] The second condition is that,

<sup>104</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>105</sup> The deployment of approximately 300 additional theatre reserve battalion forces to cover the August 2009 election was previously announced on 15 December 2008.

<sup>106</sup> HC Deb 29 April 2009, c871. The units deploying were set out in a written statement on 29 April 2009, c46WS

as before, every soldier and unit deployed to Afghanistan is and must be fully equipped for the operations that they are asked to undertake. The third condition is that our commitment be part of an agreed approach across the international coalition, with all countries bearing their fair share.

The combination of force levels, equipment levels and tasks that I am setting out today follows the clear military advice from our Chiefs of Staff and our Commanders on the ground on implementing our strategy and reducing the risk to our forces. It is on that basis that I have agreed in principle to a new British force level of 9,500, which will be put into effect once those conditions are met.<sup>107</sup>

Although no specific timeframe for achieving these conditions was set at the time, the Prime Minister confirmed to Parliament on 30 November 2009 that those extra 500 personnel, drawn from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Welsh would deploy to Afghanistan in early December.<sup>108</sup> He also went on to comment on the status of Special Forces in the country, in an attempt to portray the full UK commitment to operations in Afghanistan.<sup>109</sup> He stated that “taking into account those Special Forces, their supporting troops and the increases announced today, our total military effort in Afghanistan will be in excess of 10,000 troops”.<sup>110</sup>

In October the Prime Minister also announced that, with immediate effect, the UK regional battle group for southern Afghanistan, which had been conducting operations from Kandahar, would be re-deployed to Helmand province. It had also been reported that logistic support operations were expected to be concentrated at Camp Bastion from the end of 2010 in order to improve the efficiency of support for British ground forces, although the RAF’s air assets would remain at Kandahar airfield.<sup>111</sup>

In April 2010, 4 Mechanized Brigade assumed command responsibility for British troops in Helmand province from 11 Light Brigade (Operation *Herrick 12*). The British contingent in Afghanistan therefore currently comprises the following Army, RAF, Royal Navy and Royal Marines units which will be deployed until October 2010:<sup>112</sup>

- Headquarters, 6 (UK) Division
- 4<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade HQ and 204 Signal Squadron
- Elements of 52 Infantry Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron (258)
- Headquarters, 101 Logistic Brigade
- Headquarters 102 Logistic Brigade
- 40 Commando Royal Marines
- The Royal Dragoon Guards
- The Queen’s Royal Lancers

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<sup>107</sup> HC Deb 18 October 2009, c301

<sup>108</sup> [MOD press release](#), 30 November 2009

<sup>109</sup> The Government has previously refused to comment on the number of Special Forces personnel deployed in Afghanistan, in line with successive government’s policies on withholding information of this nature.

<sup>110</sup> HC Deb 30 November 2009, c836

<sup>111</sup> “Camp Bastion set to be sole base in Afghanistan for UK logistic support ops”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 10 February 2010

<sup>112</sup> [British Forces in Afghanistan from April 2010](#)

- 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Artillery
- 21 Engineer Regiment
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Scots Guards
- The Royal Scots Borderers, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Mercian Regiment
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles
- 3 Medical Regiment
- 34 Field Hospital
- 12 Logistic Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps
- 1 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
- 101 Force Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
- Elements of:
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery
  - 5<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Royal Artillery
  - 33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal)
  - 39 Engineer Regiment (Air Support)
  - 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic)
  - 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group
  - 2, 10, and 16<sup>th</sup> Signal Regiment
  - 14<sup>th</sup> Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare)
  - 21<sup>st</sup> Signal Regiment (Air Support)
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Rifles
  - 1, 4 and 9 Regiments, Army Air Corps
  - 6, 7, 8 and 27 Regiments, Royal Logistic Corps
  - 11 Explosive Ordnance Regiment, The Royal Logistics Corp
  - 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps
  - 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Royal Military Police

- 101 and 150 Provost Company, Royal Military Police
- 24 and 29 Postal Courier and Movement Regiment, The Royal Logistics Corp
- 105 Military Working Dog Support Unit
- 1 Military Intelligence Brigade
- Military Stabilisation Support Group
- Honourable Artillery Company
- 100, 101, 104 and 106 Regiments, Royal Artillery (Volunteers)
- 101 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) (Volunteers)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland (Volunteers)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (Volunteers)
- The London Regiment (Volunteers)
- 150 and 160 Transport Regiments, Royal Logistic Corps (Volunteers)
- 159 Supply Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (Volunteers)
- 148 Expeditionary Force Institute Squadron (Volunteers), The Royal Logistics Corp
- 1, 3, 4 and 5 Force Protection Wing Headquarters, Royal Air Force
- 2 and 51 Squadrons, Royal Air Force Regiment
- 2, 9, 13 and 14 Squadrons, Royal Air Force
- Elements of:
  - 845, 846 and 857 Naval Air Squadrons
  - 2 and 3 Royal Air Force Police Wing
  - 1 and 3 Squadrons, Royal Air Force Regiment
  - 18, 24, 27, 28, 30, and 78 Squadrons, Royal Air Force
  - 5 (Army Co-operation) Squadron, Royal Air Force
  - 1 Air Mobility Wing, Royal Air Force
  - 1 Air Control Centre, Royal Air Force
  - 90 Signals Unit, Royal Air Force
  - 2 (Mechanical Transport) Squadron, Royal Air Force
  - 5001 Squadron, Royal Air Force
  - 3 Mobile Catering Squadron, Royal Air Force

- Tactical Supply Wing, Royal Air Force
- Tactical Medical Wing, Royal Air Force
- No 1 (Expeditionary Logistics) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- 93 (Expeditionary Armaments) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- Tactical Imagery Wing, Royal Air Force

Of those personnel, 650 are expected to be Reservists, some 7% of the overall British contingent in Afghanistan.

As of 1 August 2009 71,560 members of the UK armed forces, including Reservists, have served in Afghanistan since 2001.<sup>113</sup>

In his first Statement to the House on Afghanistan on 14 June 2010, the new Prime Minister, David Cameron, highlighted the Government's commitment to the objectives of the Afghanistan campaign and sought to reiterate its importance to the UK. He stated:

Let me address the first question that people are asking. Why are we in Afghanistan? I can answer in two words: national security. Our forces are in Afghanistan to prevent Afghan territory from again being used by al-Qaeda as a base from which to plan attacks on the UK or on our allies.

Of course, the al-Qaeda training camps and the Taliban regime that protected them were removed from Afghanistan in the months after 9/11, and the presence of NATO forces prevents them from returning, but Afghanistan is not yet strong enough to look after its own security. That is why we are there [...]

Today I am advised that the threat from al-Qaeda from Afghanistan and Pakistan has reduced, but I am also advised that if it were not for the current presence of UK and international coalition forces, al-Qaeda would return to Afghanistan and the threat to the UK would rise.<sup>114</sup>

He went on to comment:

The next question is how long we must stay. The Afghan people do not want foreign forces on their soil any longer than necessary, and the British people are rightly impatient for progress. Our forces will not remain in Afghanistan a day longer than is necessary, and I want to bring them home the moment it is safe to do so [...]

That is why we back the strategy developed by General McChrystal, commander of the international security assistance forces, and endorsed by President Obama and NATO. That strategy involves protecting the civilian population from the insurgents, supporting more effective government at every level, and building up the Afghan national security forces as rapidly as is feasible. We want to transfer security responsibility for districts and provinces to Afghan control as soon as they are ready, but that must be done on the basis of facts on the ground, not a pre-announced timetable.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> HC Deb 14 September 2009, c2122W

<sup>114</sup> HC Deb 14 June 2010, c603

<sup>115</sup> HC Deb 14 June 2010, c604

Reports of a rift between Cabinet colleagues over the timetable for withdrawal of British troops in Afghanistan has however, surfaced after Foreign Secretary William Hague stated that he would be “very surprised” if Afghan security forces did not have responsibility for their own security by 2014 and that he did not expect UK combat forces to be there in 2015.<sup>116</sup> Separately Prime Minister David Cameron has called for troops to be out by 2015; while Defence Secretary Liam Fox suggested that British forces would be the last to leave Afghanistan and that strategic patience was required.<sup>117</sup>

In an attempt to clarify what many newspapers and commentators have interpreted as mixed messages coming out of the Government, the Minister for the Armed Forces, Nick Harvey issued a press statement stating:

The Prime Minister has said several times - so have I, so has the Defence Secretary - that we would hope to get the troops out just as soon as we can. We want to get them home as soon as the job is done and not leave them there a day longer, and I think that in saying that he hoped it will be possible to get them back by the time of the next election five years from now, he is, as I say, expressing a hope, he's not committing to a firm timeline. It's actually exactly the same forecast that I was making during the course of the election and I think it's just putting into the public mind a sense of an overall timeframe, but it's not committing to a particular calendar date for coming out, it'll depend on the conditions on the ground. But I think he's trying to avoid the confusion in some people's minds that it might all be over in a matter of months.

"I don't think there's ever been any suggestion that we were planning for a long-term presence there. The Afghans still support very much what the international community is doing in their country; opinion polls are taken from time to time and still show a high level of support, but they don't want foreigners in their country indefinitely. They want to get the job done, they're building up their own capacity, their national army, as quickly and effectively as they can so that they can start taking more responsibility. And as soon as they're doing that the international community will leave and recognise their sovereignty and let them get on with the job of nation-building.<sup>118</sup>

Secretary of State for Defence, Liam Fox, also confirmed during a Statement to the House on 7 July 2010:

As regards 2015, I can only repeat what the Prime Minister has said – that British troops will not be there in a combat role, or in significant numbers in five years time, but we can expect them to still be there in a training role. There will be a continued need for us to ensure that the quality of the Afghan national security forces is adequate.<sup>119</sup>

In a meeting with David Cameron on 12 July 2010 the NATO Secretary General warned the UK and other NATO allies against establishing even a provisional timetable for withdrawal, insisting that nations retain troops in Afghanistan for as long as necessary. He argued that “we can have our hopes, we can have our expectations, but I cannot give any guarantee as far as an exact date or year is concerned. All statements from all politicians have been based on the condition that the Afghans can actually take responsibility themselves”. He went on to state “the Taliban follow the political debate in troop contributing countries closely. They do

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<sup>116</sup> <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=22462763>

<sup>117</sup> “UK set to be among last out of Afghanistan says Fox”, *BBC News Online*, 30 June 2010

<sup>118</sup> [http://www.blogs.mod.uk/defence\\_news/page/5/](http://www.blogs.mod.uk/defence_news/page/5/)

<sup>119</sup> HC Deb 7 July 2010, c376

believe that if we set artificial timetables for our withdrawal, they can just sit down and wait us out and they will return when we have left".<sup>120</sup>

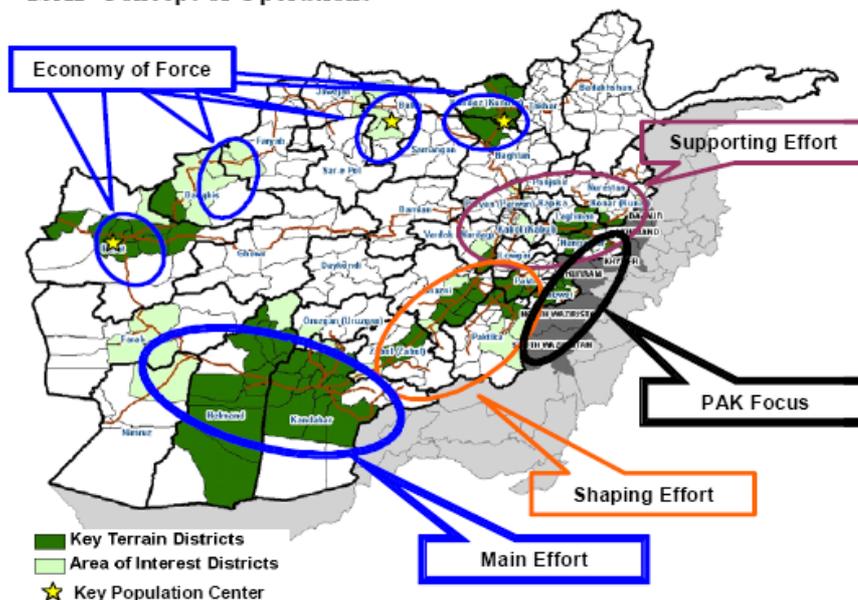
In his statement on 7 July 2010, Dr Fox also announced both the redeployment of British troops within Helmand province (see below) and the temporary deployment of elements of the UK Theatre Reserve Battalion, currently 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, to central Helmand from mid-July in order to consolidate recent gains in the area. That deployment will comprise approximately 300 personnel, temporarily taking the overall British contingent in the country to 10,300 until October 2010.

#### 4.3 Progress of the Military Campaign in the Southern Provinces

With the development of a clearer political strategy for Afghanistan the focus, from a security perspective, has now shifted toward progress of the military campaign and whether the surge of additional US and coalition forces, recent military operations and the proposals to strengthen the Afghan National Security Forces will be enough to enable Coalition allies to meet the provisional timeframe for security transition.

2010 has been acknowledged as a pivotal year and although military operations are being conducted across the whole of Afghanistan, the main focus of effort has been in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar:

Figure 23 - ISAF Concept of Operations



Source: Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

The following section therefore focuses on recent development in these regions. An assessment of recent military operations in the other regions of Afghanistan is available in the April 2010 Pentagon report, a copy of which is available online at:

[http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report\\_Final\\_SecDef\\_04\\_26\\_10.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report_Final_SecDef_04_26_10.pdf)

<sup>120</sup> "NATO chief: Afghanistan timetable puts British troops at risk", *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 2010

### **Operation Moshtarak**

In an attempt to assert government authority in the central area of Helmand province, NATO and Afghan forces, at the request of the Afghan government and the Helmand provincial government, commenced a major counter-insurgency campaign, codenamed Operation *Moshtarak*, in February 2010. With the sole intention of clearing Taliban strongholds in the region, and in particular around the area of Marjah, and swiftly establishing an Afghan government presence, the operation was considered to be the first major test of the new strategy in Afghanistan.

Involving a combined force of approximately 15,000 military personnel, including five brigades of ANSF and ISAF personnel from the US, UK, Denmark, Estonia and Canada, the operation was divided into three distinct phases:

1. Phase One – operations to ensure freedom of movement across RC-south.
2. Phase Two – governance focused ‘clear, hold and build’ operations in Central Helmand, with the aim of extending the authority of the Afghan government to the previously ungoverned areas of Nad Ali District, including the town of Marjah. Shaping operations ahead of the main offensive began in late 2009.
3. Phase three – operations in central Kandahar. Combined force planning for the expansion of operations into Kandahar is currently ongoing, although major offensive operations were not expected to begin until the summer of 2010. Unlike operations in Marjah the campaign in Kandahar is expected to build gradually in what General McChrystal called a “rising tide of security”.<sup>121</sup>

The Afghan National Security Forces took the lead in Operation *Moshtarak*, albeit partnered with ISAF forces, and that arrangement will continue during phase three operations.

Initial assessments of Operation *Moshtarak* largely labelled the campaign a success, although subsequent statements have widely acknowledged that operations remain ongoing. In its April 2010 assessment the Pentagon noted:

The initial success of the clear and hold phases of Operation MOSHTARAK resulted in localized Afghan security and improved freedom of movement. While insurgent intimidation efforts continue, the population is thus far resisting these tactics. Likewise, development and governance continue to make strides forward but will take time to mature. The expanded security in Nad Ali and Marjah has forced insurgents to conduct attacks elsewhere, as was demonstrated by the recent complex attacks in Kandahar and Lashkar Gah that caused significant civilian casualties [...]

Combined ISAF and ANSF forces continue to gain ground in Marjah. Consolidating gains and continuing to deny the Taliban a chance to re-establish a foothold will be the focus for continued operations. These events collectively demonstrate the increasing proficiency of the ANSF.<sup>122</sup>

Brigadier James Cowan, Commander of the UK’s 11 Light Brigade, which has just rotated out of Afghanistan (see above), commented at the end of March 2010:

Although we’re winning, it’s not over yet. Although I think we’ve achieved a fair amount in the last few months, the enemy has not gone away yet and the success of this

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<sup>121</sup> See <http://usacac.army.mil/blog/blogs/reflectionsfromfront/archive/2010/03/09/next-on-the-list-kandahar.aspx>

<sup>122</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan*, April 2010

campaign will not be shown for some months, perhaps years to come. This is a long term activity that we're involved with here.<sup>123</sup>

Those sentiments were also echoed by chief NATO spokesman, James Appathurai, who commented that as yet "it is too early for a final assessment. It is going in the right direction, but we have to be patient".<sup>124</sup>

That initial optimism over the success of the Marjah operation has increasingly given way to pessimism, with General McChrystal quoted in the US media at the end of May as describing Marjah as a "bleeding ulcer" and urging commanders to make faster progress in improving security.<sup>125</sup> A declaration issued by NATO Defence Ministers on 11 June stated:

Operations across Afghanistan are making measured progress in extending the reach of the Afghan Government, changing the political conditions, and marginalising the insurgency, including through particular efforts in central Helmand and Kandahar. Significant challenges remain, and success is not yet assured, but we are encouraged by recent results.<sup>126</sup>

Determined to learn lessons from the Marjah operation, General McChrystal therefore announced at the beginning of June that military operations in Kandahar would now be delayed, possibly until the autumn, in order to ensure local support. The Afghan President Hamid Karzai has indicated that no operation will begin in Kandahar without the support of local tribal elders and as such there have been increasing efforts to downplay the military aspects of the Kandahar operation and focus more specifically on improving governance.

An article in *The Financial Times* on 21 June commented:

Gen McChrystal wants to land a decisive blow against the Taliban before Nato forces pull back, and he has identified Kandahar as a crucial objective because of its symbolic and strategic importance to the Taliban. However Mr Karzai has insisted that before any action, local elders must give their support. He wants the balance of action to shift from the military to the political, and from his allies to the Afghans themselves.

The US and allies also want to see this shift in emphasis so they can claim success and begin to leave, but the Afghan government is far from ready to take the lead. After 30 years of war, Afghanistan has a dearth of good administrators, and not just in the security sector. Afghan officials themselves admit that the Taliban does a better job than the government in providing security, justice and a corruption-free bureaucracy in areas under its control. Driving the Taliban from Kandahar and keeping its fighters out will be hard enough, given that they are indistinguishable from the rest of the population, but without effective Afghan participation and follow-up, any success will be short-lived. If the Kandahar operation is seen to have failed, it will strengthen the hand of the Taliban immensely in any negotiation over power-sharing.<sup>127</sup>

The US government has indicated its intention to conduct a review of strategy in Afghanistan in December 2010.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ministry of Defence Press Release, 25 March 2010

<sup>124</sup> "Afghanistan surge planned as shift to Kandahar proposed for UK soldiers", *The Guardian*, 21 April 2010

<sup>125</sup> "Confidence in Kandahar campaign wanes", *The Financial Times*, 28 May 2010

<sup>126</sup> NATO Press Release, 11 June 2010

<sup>127</sup> "Why the Afghan end-game is so hard to play", *The Financial Times*, 21 June 2010

<sup>128</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan*, April 2010

### **Handover of Musa Qala/ Kajaki and Sangin to US Forces**

With the surge of US forces into the southern provinces during the end of 2009/first half of 2010 discussion over the possible handover of key areas of territory and command and control of RC south to US forces was considered inevitable. Indeed in April 2010 US forces assumed responsibility for the town of Musa Qala from British forces as part of a re-balancing of forces in Helmand, thereby allowing British forces to consolidate their presence in central and southern Helmand. That move was considered a possible precursor to the handover of further areas in Helmand under the control of British troops including the region surrounding the Kajaki Dam and Sangin. As part of the announcement on the division of RC South into two regional commands, the MOD confirmed in May 2010:

Additionally, under the changes, the command of the 1,100-strong British Battle Group based in Sangin and Kajaki will transfer from Task Force Helmand to the US-led Regimental Combat Team (North), which is taking on responsibility for the north of the province.<sup>129</sup>

British forces subsequently handed over responsibility for Kajaki to US forces on 25 June 2010 and redeployed, for the present, to reinforce the British contingent in Sangin.<sup>130</sup> Further details of the timeframe for the reorganisation of forces in RC South West were set out on 7 July 2010. Defence Secretary Liam Fox confirmed:

ISAF has already transferred security responsibility for Musa Qala and Kajaki to US forces, who are building on our achievements there [...] ISAF intends to restructure its forces in the Farah and Nimroz provinces so that it can consolidate a US marine brigade in northern Helmand, which will assume responsibility for security in Sangin later this year. This will simplify current command arrangements and enable UK troops to be redeployed to reinforce progress in the key districts of central Helmand. The theatre reserve battalion will then withdraw. The result will be a coherent and equitable division of the main populated areas of Helmand between three brigade-sized forces, with the US in the north and south, and the UK-led Task Force Helmand, alongside our Danish and Estonian allies, in the central population belt.<sup>131</sup>

Transfer of responsibility for Sangin to the US is expected to take place in October when UK forces currently located in the region are rotated out of Afghanistan as part of the UK's scheduled force rotation. Commenting on the planned redeployment of forces, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, stated:

This reorganisation makes very sound military sense and ensures that UK troops are deployed in the most effective way alongside ISAF and Afghan forces.

Our Service personnel can rightly be enormously proud of the work they have done in Sangin and the significant progress they have achieved there.

Sangin is a challenging area of Afghanistan and we leave it a better place. The experience our troops have gained there will be vital in the work they will continue in the important population centres of central Helmand.<sup>132</sup>

Responding to suggestions that the US marines were "bailing out" British forces in Sangin the Deputy Commander of US forces in Afghanistan, Lieutenant-General David Rodriguez, argued that the redeployment was a tactical move that would "concentrate British forces

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<sup>129</sup> MOD Press Release, 21 May 2010

<sup>130</sup> HC Deb 28 June 2010, c23WS

<sup>131</sup> HC Deb 7 July 2010, c374

<sup>132</sup> Ministry of Defence press release, 7 July 2010

where we need them most – in the central areas of the province”.<sup>133</sup> US Commander of RC South West, Major General Richard Mills, also commented:

UK forces bring with them a magnificent record of accomplishments within the very key districts of the Central Valley and their very tough but critical assignments in Sangin and at the Kajaki Dam, and their performance has been simply nothing short of magnificent. I believe the progress made by the UK forces within the very vital Central Valley area and against significant opposition is remarkable and has clearly shaped conditions for future transition of security responsibility back to the Afghan authorities.<sup>134</sup>

In the longer term, the decision to divide RC South into two regional commands and redeploy British forces accordingly has also fuelled speculation that the British contingent in Helmand could eventually be re-located to Kandahar. A number of analysts have argued that such a proposal was likely to be met with opposition from the UK military given the level of British investment in Helmand, both in terms of financial commitment and the loss of personnel, and the relationships that have been built up between British forces and local governors and tribal elders in the province, a key facet of any counterinsurgency campaign.

Indeed, in October 2009 the UK announced that the UK regional battle group for southern Afghanistan which had been conducting operations from Kandahar would be re-deployed to Helmand province; while in February 2010 it was reported that logistic support operations would also be concentrated at Camp Bastion from the end of 2010.<sup>135</sup> The MOD also confirmed at the end of May that “UK forces are committed to their enduring deployment to central Helmand and there are no plans to deploy UK forces from Helmand to anywhere else”.<sup>136</sup> Secretary of State for Defence, Liam Fox, has reiterated this position on several occasions suggesting that the move of British forces from Helmand to Kandahar was “very unlikely”.<sup>137</sup>

However, in the longer term the intention of the Netherlands and Canada to withdraw their respective contingents from Kandahar and Uruzgan in mid-2010 and 2011 respectively, will ultimately require a re-division of forces if attempts to secure additional commitments from both countries, or other allies, fails. On that basis the proposal to re-locate British forces to Kandahar in the longer term cannot be completely disregarded.

#### **4.4 NATO Roadmap for Security Transition**

At a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers at the end of April 2010 agreement on a common roadmap for progressive security transition to the Afghan authorities, beginning in late 2010, was reached. As expected the criteria for deciding on transition will be assessed across all three pillars of the Afghan National Development Strategy: security, governance and development. However, in reaching a draft agreement the NATO Secretary General cautioned:

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<sup>133</sup> “US general denies his marines are bailing out British forces”, *The Times*, 8 July 2010

<sup>134</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Defence in the Media*, 8 July 2010

<sup>135</sup> “Camp Bastion set to be sole base in Afghanistan for UK logistic support ops”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 10 February 2010

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>137</sup> “MOD denies Britain had eyes shut over Helmand”, *BBC News Online*, 9 June 2010

We need to be clear about what transition means and doesn't mean. Transition means that Afghan authorities take the lead, and we move into a supportive role. But it doesn't mean a rush for the exit.<sup>138</sup>

Few details of that draft plan were released with the expectation that a roadmap will now be developed in conjunction with the Afghan government for endorsement at the security conference in Kabul on 20 July 2010. The longer term intention is to launch the process in time for the NATO Heads of State and Government summit in Lisbon in November 2010. An article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* suggested, however, that:

According to allied sources, the plan will include several elements. One is a hard security component based on the conditions specific to each province of Afghanistan. This could involve a review board comprising the Afghan government, ISAF, UN authorities and others who would decide "whether a given province is ready for transition – including factors beyond the military such as reconstruction and civil society" [...]

Another will be a stronger civilian effort to ensure that all civilian actors are coordinating their activities on the ground [...] a third element will be the rehabilitation and reintegration of former Taliban combatants into civilian life.<sup>139</sup>

#### 4.5 Status of the Afghan National Security Forces

As an article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* in May 2009 succinctly noted:

The Afghan army and police are the US and NATO's ticket out of Afghanistan – everyone agrees that security, like governance, needs an Afghan face – so the training overseen by CSTC-A and by the PRTs could make or break the mission.<sup>140</sup>

One of the main focuses of the 'Af-Pak' strategy in Afghanistan and the political framework agreed at the London Conference in January 2010 is therefore to expand the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces. In order to be capable of assuming the security mission in the south and east of the country, the new 'Af-Pak' strategy concluded that the ANSF must therefore substantially increase in size and ability, setting the targets for trained personnel of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and police (ANP) over the next two years, at 134,000 and 82,000 personnel respectively.<sup>141</sup> The review acknowledged that the salaries paid to the ANA and ANP must become more competitive with those paid by the insurgents and called on the international community to assume responsibility for the funding of a significantly enhanced ANSF for the foreseeable future. That international financial commitment has been estimated in the region of \$2bn.<sup>142</sup> The London Conference took those targets one step further and set out a goal of phased growth and expansion of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police to 171,600 and 134,000 personnel respectively, by October 2011.<sup>143</sup>

Yet, as Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International studies has noted:

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<sup>138</sup> NATO press release, 23 April 2010

<sup>139</sup> "NATO reviews Afghan security transfer plan", *Jane's Defence Review*, 24 March 2010

<sup>140</sup> "Afghanistan's critical year", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 6 May 2009

<sup>141</sup> The Afghan Compact of 2006 established a framework for security sector reform that envisaged a 62,000 strong professional police service. This was later modified by the Afghan National Development Strategy in 2008 and subsequent decisions by the Afghan Government which set the new goal at 82,000 police officers.

<sup>142</sup> Training, equipping and sustaining the ANSF is funded through the Afghan Security Forces Fund, including the NATO ANA Trust Fund

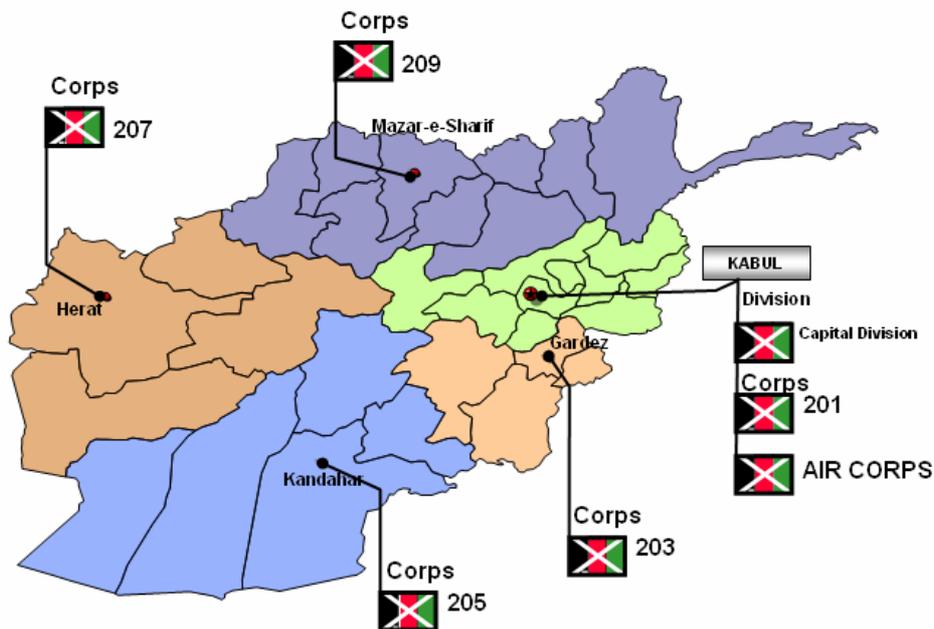
<sup>143</sup> These targets were agreed by the joint Coordination and Monitoring Board on 20 January 2010. This will take the overall number of ANSF personnel to over 300,000.

NATO/ISAF and US forces cannot hope to win a military victory on their own. Their success will be determined in large part by how well and how quickly they build up a much larger and more effective Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) first to support NATO/ISAF efforts, then take the lead, and eventually replace NATO/ISAF and US forces. The challenge is find a workable trade off between how well is 'good enough' the how quickly is as fast as possible.<sup>144</sup>

On the issue of cost, he also noted that "funding such expansion to the ANSF will also be far cheaper than maintaining or increasing NATO/ISAF forces".<sup>145</sup>

### **Afghan National Army**

As of 19 May 2010 the strength of the ANA stood at 119,388 (slightly above its March 2010 target of 112,700), located as follows:



Source: ISAF Headquarters, June 2010

At present the ANA is subordinate to the MoD and is divided into five regional corps (aligned with the ISAF regional commands) and an air corps. Each corps is divided into brigades comprised of three infantry kandaks, one combat support kandak, and one combat service support kandak. The commando kandaks are under the tactical control of the regional corps. AWOL rates for 2009 currently stand at 9% on average, as opposed to 7% for 2008. According to the US Department of Defense, AWOL rates are highest for those units with high operational tempos.<sup>146</sup> It is expected that initiatives instituted in December 2009 including better pay and better equipment are expected to approve attrition rates.

The ANA is considered to be broadly on track to meet its targeted growth figure of 134,000 by October 2010 and 171,600 thereafter by October 2011.<sup>147</sup> However, as outlined above, the US has acknowledged that the ability of international forces to "effectively grow and develop the ANSF is at risk" unless the force generation requirements of the training mission

<sup>144</sup> Anthony Cordesman, "Afghan National Security Forces, Center for Strategic and international studies, 4 November 2009

<sup>145</sup> ibid

<sup>146</sup> Department of Defense, *Progress toward Security and stability in Afghanistan*, June 2009

<sup>147</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

in Afghanistan are fulfilled.<sup>148</sup> In addition to the lack of institutional trainers, the ANA also has a capability shortfall of 17 Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams, against a total requirement of 180. The United States has taken the lead in supporting the expansion of the force by providing funds for the initial training and equipping of new ANA units, although it has called on NATO allies and other non-NATO partners (for example Jordan) to fill those capability gaps.<sup>149</sup>

The capabilities of the ANA are also considered to be slowly improving, albeit still short of the level of quality and effectiveness that is required in the longer term. Insufficient leadership capability, planning ability, shortages and accountability of essential equipment, attitudes toward ethnicity and in the poorer Afghan army units – low literacy rates and criminal activity, have been identified as some of the key issues facing the development of the ANA.<sup>150</sup> However, the report from the US Department of Defense on progress in Afghanistan in April 2010 commented:

COMISAF's new paradigm of embedded partnering, which occurs at every level within the MoD from the Ministry down to squad level, will provide direct oversight and leadership to mitigate some of the risk associated with a lack of qualified officers and NCOs in the ANA. Partnering, which involves co-locating ISAF forces with the ANA to integrate mutual resources, provide oversight, and build a more cohesive and trusting relationship, is not the same as mentoring, which is also occurring through the NATO OMLTs and U.S. Embedded Training Teams (ETTs).<sup>151</sup>

That report also set out the capability milestones that had been achieved to date (CM1 is defined as capable of independent operations, CM2 as capable of leading an operation with NATO support, CM3 as capable of participating in missions and CM4 as formed but not yet capable of conducting operations):

As of March 2010, 22 ANA units were CM1, 35 were CM2, and 28 were CM3. The slow progress in ANA *kandaks* achieving CM ratings over the last year has multiple causes, High attrition and low retention have resulted in a large number of new personnel cycling into units. Additionally, many of the units that are not achieving CM1 ratings are in the south with the 205th Corps, which has had increased operational tempo. Ongoing combat operations since January 2010 have had a negative rate on manning, equipping, and training in these *kandaks*, which caused a downgrade in CM ratings. Finally, throughout the entire ANA, there is a shortage of trained and competent leadership in the officer and NCO corps that has affected the quality of the *kandaks*. COMISAF's implementation of embedded partnering should help counter some of these negative trends in the upcoming months.

It is also important to note that the current CM ratings look only at the manning, training, and equipping of a unit, so a combat unit can be operationally effective without necessarily being rated at CM1. COMISAF is looking at alternatives to CM ratings. An overall assessment of district security forces would provide a more comprehensive look at the development of both the ANSF and the security situation in a district.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *ibid*

<sup>149</sup> The nations currently contributing forces to the OMLT are set out at: [http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets-april/Apr%202010-Fact%20Sheet%20OMLT\(2\).pdf](http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets-april/Apr%202010-Fact%20Sheet%20OMLT(2).pdf)

<sup>150</sup> See "The US Army's colossal training task", *BBC News Online*, 29 October 2009 and Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>151</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>152</sup> *ibid*

Questions over the status of the ANA, and more specifically over its ability to begin taking responsibility for Afghan security in certain areas from the end of 2010, has once again come to the fore after a rogue Afghan soldier killed three British military personnel and wounded four others in Nahr-e Saraj in Helmand province on 13 July 2010. Responding to that incident, spokesmen for Task Force Helmand, Lieutenant Colonel James Carr-Smith said:

We believe these were the actions of a lone individual who has betrayed his ISAF and Afghan comrades. His whereabouts are currently unknown but we are making strenuous efforts to find him. He should know that his actions will not deter us from our task and we will continue to work closely with our Afghan friends to bring security to Helmand.<sup>153</sup>

General Petraeus also commented:

This is a combined, joint mission; Afghan and alliance troopers fighting shoulder-to-shoulder against the Taliban and other extremists.

We have sacrificed greatly together, and we must ensure that the trust between our forces remains solid in order to defeat our common enemies.<sup>154</sup>

The incident was the second such action involving ANSF personnel targeting British soldiers in the last nine months.

### ***Afghan National Police***

As of 19 May 2010 the strength of the ANP<sup>155</sup> was 104,459 with a further 7,116 personnel in training. The force is therefore considered to be well on its way to achieving its interim manpower target of 109,000 by October 2010, and its overall target of 134,000 by October 2011.<sup>156</sup> In line with COMISAF recommendations:

In 2010, ANP growth will be accomplished by increasing the number of light infantry, COIN-trained Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) Gendarmerie to improve police capability to directly confront the insurgency; the number of Afghan Border Police (ABP) to improve security at the border; and the number of Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) at the district and provincial levels to improve the police-to-population ratio.<sup>157</sup>

Recruitment has not been regarded as a serious issue for the ANP, but the lack of formal training, the lack of supporting governance and legal structures, the high rate of illiteracy among recruits, and the inability to deal with endemic corruption which undermines both the effectiveness of the ANP but also their public reputation among the Afghan civilian population, are considered longstanding problems. An article in *RUSI Newsbrief* in May 2009 quoted a former Afghan Police Chief as commenting that “unfortunately today, the police are illiterate, warriors, drug-users, criminals and looters”.<sup>158</sup> In contrast to the ANA, the ANP have also found themselves increasingly on the frontline, an easy target for the Taliban, frequently overrun and sustaining greater casualties. In 2009 1,000 police personnel were reported to have been killed.<sup>159</sup> The large number of international stakeholders in the police

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<sup>153</sup> Ministry of Defence press release, 13 July 2010

<sup>154</sup> *ibid*

<sup>155</sup> The ANP consists of four major categories of police: the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP), the Afghan Border Police (ABP), the Afghan National Civil order Police (ANCOP) and the Specialised Police.

<sup>156</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>157</sup> *ibid*

<sup>158</sup> Andrew Scott Houston, “A new strategy for Afghan police reform”, *RUSI Newsbrief*, 13 May 2009

<sup>159</sup> “Troubled state of Afghan police”, *BBC News Online*, 4 November 2009

training programme<sup>160</sup> has also historically complicated the scheme leading to a disjointed and confusing approach to police training. An article in *Jane's Defence Weekly* in September 2009 argued, for example, that the EU's contribution to the police training missions (EUPOL) had "fallen short of the mark".<sup>161</sup>

The new strategy of the US administration, in particular the commitment of greater resources, was therefore regarded as a welcome, and overdue, move. Specifically, the intention to create Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams to address the training needs of the ANP on a similar basis to the ANA had been particularly welcome given the expected role of the ANP in 'holding' and 'building' ground taken from the Taliban insurgents, without which any counterinsurgency strategy will not succeed. The establishment of the International Police Coordination Board, which includes all relevant stakeholders, has also gone some way to assist in the co-ordination of strategy and approach. In March 2010 the Afghan government also approved a National Police Strategy which sets out the long term vision for the ANP, including the operational planning guidance for the continued development of operational capacity. Since April 2010 mandatory drug awareness training has been included in all police basic training curricula; while a revised ANP pay package was instituted in January 2010.

According to the Pentagon's April 2010 report, the ANP currently has a shortfall of 108 Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams against a total requirement of 475.<sup>162</sup> That report also went on to comment on the capability achievements by the ANP made since mid-2009:

The ANP continues to lag behind the ANA and has made limited progress in CM ratings. In May 2009, the ANP had 24 districts or ANCOP units at CM1, 27 at CM2, and 71 at CM3. As of February 2010, only 26 districts/units are CM1, 64 are CM2, and 100 are CM3 [...]

The lack of Police Mentoring Teams and POMLTs has caused a gap in mentoring in many of these units as many district AUP have no mentors or mentoring teams spread throughout several districts. COMISAF's embedded partnering should help provide needed assistance for many of these forces. For the AUP and ANCOP, poor retention and high attrition cause district ANP units to constantly be turning over, thus requiring the need for ANP to be retrained. Poor leadership and a scarcity of trained officers and NCOs across the ANP have a large affect on the quality of the ANP forces at the district level as well. For ANCOP, the high operational tempo over the past year with both FDD and operations in the south has negatively affected our ability to man, train, and equip the force. Finally, for the district AUP, the lack of other rule of law improvement in districts also limits the effectiveness of the police. Even when well-trained, AUP units have regressed when a mentoring team has been reassigned.

It is also important to note that the current CM ratings look only at the manning, training, and equipping of a unit, so a combat unit can be operationally effective without necessarily being rated at CM1. COMISAF is assessing alternatives to CM ratings in the upcoming months to develop a methodology to provide an overall assessment of

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<sup>160</sup> Including NATO, the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan, the US embassy, the United Nations and individual countries.

<sup>161</sup> "NATO head calls for more Afghan military trainers", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 9 September 2009

<sup>162</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan*, April 2010. The countries currently providing personnel to the POMLT are available at: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets-april/Apr2010-%20POMLT.pdf>

district security forces to provide a more comprehensive look at the development of both the ANSF and the security situation in a district.<sup>163</sup>

However, a number of analysts have argued that the new US strategy for the ANP “appears depressingly familiar”. A *RUSI Newsbrief* article in May 2009 commented:

In particular, two approaches perpetuate familiar problems.

The first is the game of numbers. Mr Obama’s plans recycle old proposals about the size of the ANP, by pledging to work towards meeting the target of 82,000 police officers. But this figure was agreed long ago. Present staffing is already near that, and the small increases in human and financial capital currently proposed are unlikely to be decisive in ANP reform [...]

The second problem is the continuous use of the ANP as a paramilitary force, a crucial factor in explaining their poor performance at actual policing duties, which are supposed to be their real responsibilities [...] sending ANP units into harms way achieves very little, whereas providing security to the public and reducing criminality is one of the most effective tools for winning hearts and minds. This is especially important with regard to how the Afghan people respond to the ANP as a public service.<sup>164</sup>

That article went on to conclude:

Although extra manpower will significantly aid progress in terms of training and mentoring new recruits, Obama’s strategy is still doomed to fail. It falls short of the real target, which is the creating of a framework for real change. Increasing the number of police will not tackle the widespread problem of ANP corruption, as this tends to emanate from the centre. Reform efforts must take a more comprehensive approach by combating corruption from top to bottom.

An effective strategy must also initiate judicial reform [...] the police and the judiciary are inextricably linked to one another and cannot be treated separately.<sup>165</sup>

The shooting of five British military personnel by an Afghan police officer at the beginning of November 2009 also raised questions over the nature of the training regime and whether it would scupper future progress and confidence in the overall strategy. Chief British mentor to the Afghan National Police, Lieutenant Colonel Jasper de Quincey Adams, suggested that the ANP would require another three years of training and investment in order to be turned into a credible force. An article in *The Independent* quoted the officer as stating that:

The ANA is already a credible force and they’ve had about three years more investment in terms of money, equipment and training than the ANP, so that’s probably a good yardstick to use.<sup>166</sup>

In response to the incident involving British forces, he went on to comment that “embedded partnering is absolutely the only way to achieve a lasting effect. We’ve got to live alongside these guys, standing shoulder to shoulder. We won’t allow the incident to break the bonds we have established”.<sup>167</sup> Helmand’s Provincial Chief of Police, Colonel Asadullah Shirzad,

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<sup>163</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>164</sup> Andrew Scott Houston, “A new strategy for Afghan police reform”, *RUSI Newsbrief*, 13 May 2009

<sup>165</sup> *ibid*

<sup>166</sup> “Afghan police need three years of training”, *The Independent*, 12 November 2009

<sup>167</sup> *ibid*

has also suggested that bringing the ANP up to a professional standard would take several years.<sup>168</sup>

In its April 2010 report to Congress, the US Department of Defense also noted:

Finally, in order for the ANSF to successfully transition to security lead, there is a requirement for a minimum acceptable rule of law capacity (i.e., governance, courts, judges, prosecutors, and correctional capacity) to support the security effort. Defining sufficient rule of law capability, and the resources required to achieve it, is outside the scope of this report but is being addressed by the interagency and international community. Without the necessary supporting rule of law structures, the ANP will become ineffective over time. No matter how many police we train or how well we partner with them, without sufficient rule of law and governance, transition will fail.<sup>169</sup>

In June 2010, Lt Col Roly Walker, Commanding officer of the Grenadier Guards which have just returned from Afghanistan, also labelled the Afghan national police force as “the biggest obstacle to progress” and that the local force “was the reason for the insurgency” in the Nad-e-Ali district of Helmand.<sup>170</sup>

## 5 Related Library Papers

### Ongoing:

- Research Paper RP10/45, [The ‘AfPak’ Policy and the Pashtuns](#), 22 June 2010
- Standard Note, SN/IA/5413, [Political and Security Arrangements in the Pakistani border areas with Afghanistan](#)
- Standard Note, SN/IA/5411, [The AfPak policy: origins and evolution](#)
- Standard Note SN/IA/5410, [Armed militant groups based in the Pakistani border areas](#)
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- Standard Note, SN/IA/5128, [Afghanistan: Equipment Issues](#)
- Standard Note, SN/IA/5025, [Afghanistan and Narcotics: Opium Poppy Cultivation Trends 2001-2009](#)
- Standard Note, SN/SG/3139, [The cost of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan](#)

### Background:

- Standard Note, SN/IA/4854, [The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan](#), 9 February 2009
- Standard Note, SN/IA/4788, [Afghanistan](#), 8 July 2008

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<sup>168</sup> *ibid*

<sup>169</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, April 2010

<sup>170</sup> “Afghanistan police corruption is fuelling insurgency”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 June 2010

- Standard Note, SN/IA/4143, *International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan: Recent Developments*, 2 May 2008
- Standard Note, SN/IA/3831, *Afghanistan and Narcotics*, 4 June 2007
- Standard Note, SN/IA/2601, *International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan*, 11 July 2006
- Research Paper, RP05/72, *Afghanistan: The Culmination of the Bonn Process*, 26 October 2005
- Research Paper, RP01/112, *The Campaign against International Terrorism: Prospects after the Fall of the Taliban*, 11 December 2001
- Research Paper, RP01/72, *11 September 2001: The Response*, 3 October 2001