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## **NATO North Atlantic Council Topic Area B**

*The role of NATO in regional conflicts: Review of NATO missions and operations. Examining the progress in Afghanistan and the Balkans and the renewal of the operational mandates.*



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The most significant aspect of the new transformed post-Cold War character of NATO has been the resumption of peacekeeping and peace-building operations in the Euro-Atlantic region and its circumference. In the Balkans, where NATO first committed itself in 1995, instability and conflict posed grave threats to the security interests of NATO member states as well as to European peace in general. More recently, with its commitment to peacekeeping in Afghanistan, the Alliance has demonstrated that it is prepared to address security challenges beyond its traditional area of interest.

Moreover, its involvement in such operations has called for increased contacts and cooperation with non-NATO troop contributing countries as well as with other organizations. This outlines the kind of security cooperation needed today, when close working relationships with international and non-governmental organizations and with non-NATO countries, such as those participating in the Partnership for Peace, are fundamental.

## **Bringing Stability to the Balkans**

- When the NATO Stabilization Force (SFOR) left Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2004, its departure reflected the improvement in the security situation in the wider region in recent years. It also heralded deeper security cooperation between the Alliance and the European Union, which deployed a new peacekeeping force and took responsibility for many important security tasks in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- In the years since the Alliance's intervention, the prospects of the Balkans and its people have changed almost beyond recognition. Whereas the threat of war hung over the entire region, today the likelihood of a return to hostilities is almost unthinkable. Whereas the Balkans appeared politically to be headed in a very different direction than the rest of the continent, today European integration is a realistic goal for all the countries of the region, in large as a result of the security that the Alliance has provided.
- Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, are candidates for the Partnership for Peace program. Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are waiting for NATO membership and are already contributing to NATO lead operations. And



other countries in the wider region, like Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia, have already become NATO members, extending this way the peace and stability zone around the region.

- But there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Serbia's international rehabilitation may only be complete when it has met all the requirements for PfP membership, including surrendering the most notorious war crimes suspects on its ground. The future political status of Kosovo has not been resolved and robust international presence remains necessary. Also, the problematic economies of the region undermine even the most determined international peace-building efforts.
- In recognition of ongoing threats to stability, NATO should remain committed to building stability throughout Southeastern Europe. Indeed, the successful termination of SFOR does not spell the end of NATO's engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Rather, it is an important step in the evolution of the Alliance's security presence in the region. Even now, after the deployment of the European Union's force, EUFOR, NATO has retained its own military headquarters in the country. Whereas the EUFOR is responsible for retaining day-to-day security, NATO works towards defence reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina, preparing the country for PfP membership and eventually for full Alliance membership. The NATO headquarters, is also working on counter terrorism, apprehending war-crimes suspects and intelligence gathering.
- Cooperation between the EU and NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on the arrangements known as "Berlin Plus". This term refers to the fact that the 1996 meeting at which NATO foreign ministers agreed to create a European Security and Defence Identity and make Alliance assets available for this purpose took place in Berlin. In practice, the arrangements seek to avoid unnecessary duplication of capacities and to ensure that the two organizations can work together. The strategic commander of the EUFOR is NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, who is also the most senior EU officer and is stationed at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe, in Belgium. The chain of command runs from an EU cell at SHAPE through another EU cell at Allied Joint Force Command Naples, which was responsible for SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as



the Kosovo force (KFOR), to ensure that the missions operate seamlessly together. Contingency plans exist for NATO to provide new supporting forces if required.

- EUFOR derives its mandate from a new UN Security Council resolution and has an initial strength of 7,000 that is equal in size to SFOR. This compares with an initial NATO-led force, the Implementation Force (IFOR), of 60,000 more heavily armed and equipped troops that deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995. IFOR had a one-year mandate to oversee implementation of the military aspects of the peace agreement: bringing about and maintaining an end to hostilities, separating the armed forces Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, transferring territory between the two entities according to the peace agreement, and moving the parties' forces and heavy weapons into approved storage sites. These goals were achieved by June 1996.
- NATO's decisions to intervene militarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina and then to deploy IFOR in 1995 were extremely controversial at the time. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been the scene of many firsts for NATO and the decisions taken in response to events in Bosnia and Herzegovina have helped shape NATO's evolution since the end of the Cold War. The Alliance first used armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 28 February 1994 when it shot down four Bosnian Serb warplanes that were violating the UN-imposed flight ban. NATO also launched its first air campaign, Operation Deliberate Force, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in August and September 1995. And NATO first deployed a peacekeeping force, IFOR, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995. The Alliance's adaptation and learning process was especially evident in the way in which peacekeeping in Bosnia and Herzegovina under IFOR and later SFOR evolved and fed into the approach adopted when KFOR deployed in Kosovo in June 1999. Moreover, experience acquired in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains extremely relevant as NATO moves beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.
- SFOR's activities ranged from patrolling and providing area security through supporting defence reform and supervising demining operations, to arresting individuals indicted for war crimes and assisting the return of refugees and displaced people to their homes. The



operational mandate, which derived from UN Security Council Resolution 1088, gave the force the ability not only to maintain, but also, if necessary, to enforce it.

- SFOR troops carried out regular patrols throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain a secure environment. Multinational specialized units were deployed to deal with instances of unrest. SFOR also collected and destroyed unregistered weapons and ordnance in private hands, in order to contribute to the overall safety of the population and to build confidence in the peace process. In 2003 alone, SFOR disposed of more than 11,000 weapons and 45,000 grenades. SFOR was also one of several organizations involved in demining in Bosnia and Herzegovina. NATO forces carried out some demining themselves and helped to set up demining schools in Banja Luka, Mostar and Travnik. They also helped to establish a sniffer dog training school in Bihac. Furthermore, SFOR had Multinational Specialized Units (MSU) that assisted the EU Police Mission (EUPM). The EUPM is responsible for helping the Bosnian authorities develop local police forces that meet the highest European and international standards, through monitoring, mentoring and inspecting police managerial and operational capacities.
- A key aspect of SFOR's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina concerned reform of the country's defence structures, which had been divided into three rival ethnic groups at the end of hostilities. Within the framework of a Defence Reform Commission, both SFOR and NATO worked to help Bosnia and Herzegovina build a unified command and control structure and to develop joint doctrine and standards for training and equipment that are compatible with NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) norms. In March 2004, a state-level Defence Minister brought the country's two separate armies under a single command structure. NATO's military headquarters in Sarajevo has a leadership role in the Defence Reform Commission and is continuing to work on defence reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Although the apprehension of indicted war criminals was officially the responsibility of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO forces were instrumental in most arrests that have taken place. In total, SFOR brought 39 war crimes suspects to the International



Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague (ICTY). SFOR also provided security and logistical support to ICTY investigative teams as well as surveillance of and ground patrolling around alleged mass graves. Through its military headquarters in Sarajevo, NATO remains committed to bring to justice all war crimes suspects still at large.

- In addition to helping other organizations working on Bosnia and Herzegovina's reconstruction, SFOR launched its own Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) projects in areas such as structural engineering and transportation. SFOR participated in the maintenance and repair of roads and railways in collaboration with the local authorities and other international agencies. This work was critical to providing freedom of movement throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- NATO has been leading a peacekeeping operation in Kosovo since June 1999 in support of wider international efforts to build peace and stability in the contested province. The NATO-led Kosovo Force, or KFOR, deployed in the wake of a 78-day air campaign launched by the Alliance in March 1999 to halt and reverse the humanitarian catastrophe that was then unfolding. That campaign, which was NATO's second, followed more than a year of fighting in the province and the failure of international efforts to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means.

Simmering tension in Kosovo resulting from the 1989 imposition of direct rule from Belgrade of this predominantly Albanian province erupted in violence between Serbian military and police and Kosovar Albanians at the end of February 1998. The international community became increasingly concerned about the escalating conflict, its humanitarian consequences and the risk of it spreading to other countries, as well as Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's disregard for diplomatic efforts aimed at peacefully resolving the crisis and the destabilising role of Kosovar Albanian militants.

On 13 October 1998, the North Atlantic Council authorised activation orders for NATO air strikes, in support of diplomatic efforts to make the Milosevic regime withdraw forces from Kosovo, cooperate in bringing an end to the violence and facilitate the return of refugees to their homes. Following further diplomatic initiatives, President Milosevic agreed



to comply and the air strikes were called off. Further measures were taken in support of UN Security Council resolutions calling for an end to the conflict, including the establishment of a Kosovo Verification Mission by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and an aerial surveillance mission by NATO, as well as a NATO military task force to assist in the evacuation of members of the Verification Mission in the event of further conflict.

The situation in Kosovo flared up again at the beginning of 1999, following a number of acts of provocation on both sides and the use of excessive force by the Serbian military and police. This included the massacre of 40 unarmed civilians in the village of Racak on 15 January. Renewed international efforts to give new political impetus to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict resulted in the convening of negotiations between the parties to the conflict in London and Paris under international mediation. These negotiations failed, however, and in March 1999, Serbian military and police forces stepped up the intensity of their operations, moving extra troops and tanks into the region, in a clear breach of agreements reached. Tens of thousands of people began to flee their homes in the face of this systematic offensive. A final unsuccessful attempt was made by US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke to persuade President Milosevic to reverse his policies. All diplomatic avenues having been exhausted, NATO launched an air campaign against the Milosevic regime on 24 March 1999.

NATO's political objectives were to bring about a verifiable stop to all military action, violence and repression; the withdrawal from Kosovo of military personnel, police and paramilitary forces; the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence; the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organisations; and the establishment of a political agreement for Kosovo in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Following diplomatic efforts by Russia and the European Union on 3 June, a Military Technical Agreement was concluded between NATO and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 9 June. On the following day, after confirmation that the withdrawal of



Yugoslav forces from Kosovo had begun, NATO announced the suspension of the air campaign. On 10 June, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 welcomed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's acceptance of the principles for a political solution, including an immediate end to violence and a rapid withdrawal of its military, police and paramilitary forces and the deployment of an effective international civil and security presence, with substantial NATO participation.

- The first elements of KFOR entered Kosovo on 12 June 1999. By 20 June, the withdrawal of Serbian forces was complete. KFOR tasks have included assistance with the return or relocation of displaced persons and refugees; reconstruction and demining; medical assistance; security and public order; security of ethnic minorities; protection of patrimonial sites; border security; interdiction of cross-border weapons smuggling; implementation of a Kosovo wide weapons, ammunition and explosives amnesty program; weapons destruction; and support for the establishment of civilian institutions, law and order, the judicial and penal system, the electoral process and other aspects of the political, economic and social life of the province. KFOR was initially composed of some 50 000 personnel from NATO member countries, Partner countries and non-NATO countries under unified command and control. By the beginning of 2002, KFOR had been reduced to around 39 000 troops. Improvements in the security environment enabled NATO to reduce KFOR troop levels to around 26 000 by June 2003 and to 17 500 by the end of that year. A setback in progress towards a stable, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo occurred in March 2004, when renewed violence broke out between Albanians and Serbs and KFOR troops were attacked. NATO contingency plans for such an eventuality enabled the rapid deployment of some 2500 additional troops to reinforce the existing KFOR strength.
- Pending resolution of Kosovo's status, the Alliance's commitment manifested through KFOR is unlikely to undergo significant reductions. In the meantime, measures permitting the return of refugees, economic reform and other standards have been defined by the United Nations as the necessary conditions for normalization. At the Istanbul Summit, NATO heads of state and government condemned the renewed ethnic violence that had erupted in March 2004 and reaffirmed NATO's commitment to a secure, stable and multi-



ethnic Kosovo, on the basis of full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. They also reiterated their support for the agreed “Standards before Status” policy and the associated Standards Review Mechanism.

Ahead of the comprehensive review of the Standards Implementation Process scheduled for the end of 2005, NATO defence ministers agreed at their meeting in Brussels in December 2004 to maintain a robust KFOR profile during the year 2005. In the meantime, in August 2005, the North Atlantic Council decided to restructure KFOR, replacing the four existing multinational brigades with five task forces. This reform will be introduced gradually and will allow greater flexibility with, for instance, the removal of restrictions on the cross-boundary movement of units based in different sectors of Kosovo. The move from brigade to task force will also place more emphasis on intelligence led operations, with task forces working closely with both the local police and the local population to gather information. As a result of the conflict in Kosovo, the countries of the region faced major humanitarian, political and economic problems. At the height of the Kosovo crisis, more than 230 000 refugees had arrived in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, more than 430 000 in Albania and some 64 000 in Montenegro. Approximately 21 500 had reached Bosnia and Herzegovina and more than 61 000 had been evacuated to other countries. Within Kosovo itself, an estimated 580 000 people had been rendered homeless. To help ease the humanitarian situation on the ground, NATO forces flew in many thousands of tons of food and equipment. By the end of May 1999, over 4666 tons of food and water, 4325 tons of other goods, 2624 tons of tents and nearly 1600 tons of medical supplies had been transported to the area.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, NATO troops built refugee camps, refugee reception centers and emergency feeding stations and moved hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid to those in need. In Albania, NATO deployed substantial forces to provide similar forms of assistance and helped the UNHCR with the coordination of humanitarian aid flights to enable the evacuation of refugees to safety in other countries, including many NATO countries. Aircraft supplied by NATO member countries supplemented these flights. The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center (EADRCC) established at NATO in June 1998 also played an important role in the coordination of support to UNHCR relief operations.



A NATO PfP Cell was set up in Tirana from 1998 to December 2002 to assist the government with PfP programs and procedures. In June 2002, NATO nominated a Senior Military Representative to Albania, with headquarters in Tirana. The role of the Senior Military Representative is to advise Tirana on military aspects of security sector reform, including the restructuring of the Albanian armed forces, and on military aspects of the Membership Action Plan and PfP Planning and Review Process, in both of which Albania is a participant. NATO Headquarters Tirana includes a NATO Advisory Team, which assists the Senior Military Representative in the implementation of these tasks. A further task assigned to NATO Headquarters Tirana has been to provide support for NATO-led operations in the region. A significant contribution to NATO operations is also made by Albania itself, through the authorization of surveillance and reconnaissance flights over its territory as well as cooperation on border security issues between Albanian border police and military units and KFOR.

NATO became involved in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at the request of the Skopje authorities to help defuse an escalating conflict between the government and ethnic Albanian rebels to head off what might have degenerated into a full-scale war.

In June 2001, President Boris Trajkovski of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia asked for NATO assistance to help demilitarize the National Liberation Army (NLA) and disarm ethnic Albanian groups operating on the territory of his country. In response, the North Atlantic Council took a double-track approach: it condemned the attacks and adopted measures in support of the government's action against extremist activities, while urging the government to moderate its military action and adopt constitutional reforms to increase the participation of ethnic Albanians in society and politics.

A political dialogue between both parties was engaged, leading to a peace plan and a cease-fire. The signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement on 13 August 2001 opened the way for the entry of NATO troops into the country on 27 August 2001 and for the introduction of internal reforms. The 30-day mission, code-named Operation Essential Harvest was to collect and destroy all weapons voluntarily handed in by NLA personnel. The operation involved some 3500 NATO troops and their logistical support. Approximately 3875 weapons and 397 600 other items, including mines and



explosives, were collected. Later in the year, the 15 constitutional amendments in the peace agreement were passed by the Parliament.

In September 2001, President Trajkovski requested a follow-on force to provide protection for international monitors from the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe overseeing implementation of the peace plan for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Known as Operation Amber Fox, the follow-on mission involved some 700 troops provided by NATO member countries, under German leadership, reinforcing some 300 troops already based in the country. It started on 27 September 2001 with a three-month mandate to contribute to the protection of international monitors overseeing the implementation of the peace plan and was subsequently extended.

In response to a request from President Trajkovski, NATO agreed to continue supporting the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with a new mission starting on 16 December 2002, known as Operation Allied Harmony. The North Atlantic Council recognized that while Operation Amber Fox could now be concluded, a follow-on international military presence in the country was still required to minimize the risk of destabilization. The mission consisted of operational elements to provide support for the international monitors and advisory elements to assist the government in assuming responsibility for security throughout the country.

The NATO-led Operation Allied Harmony continued until 31 March 2003, when responsibility for the mission was handed to the European Union. NATO has subsequently maintained both a civilian and a military presence in the country to assist and advise the national authorities on developing security sector reforms and on the country's participation in the Membership Action Plan (MAP). NATO Headquarters Skopje, established for this purpose, consists of some 120 combined military and civilian personnel. It is a non-tactical headquarters under the command of a NATO Senior Military Representative. In the light of the damage and wear and tear on roads and bridges caused by increased military traffic and the use of the road network as military supply routes, NATO is also contributing to reconstruction and other civil engineering projects in the country. NATO Headquarters Skopje plays an important role in the coordination of these efforts,



which are being undertaken in conjunction with the civil engineering Department of Skopje University.

## **Helping secure Afghanistan's future**

*NATO has been leading an international peacekeeping force in Afghanistan and has been helping to bring peace and stability to the country after three decades of turmoil. This novel effort, launched in August 2003 when NATO took command of the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), was the Alliance's first mission beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. As such, it demonstrated NATO's ability to address new security challenges wherever they may arise. As NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said: "Afghanistan is a top priority for NATO. Our own security is closely linked to the future of Afghanistan as a stable, secure country where citizens can rebuild their lives after decades of war."*

- Initially restricted to providing security in and around Kabul, the Alliance is now expanding the mission to cover other parts of the country via so-called Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Specifically, NATO is seeking to assist the government of Afghanistan in maintaining security within its area of operations, to support the government in expanding its authority over the whole country, and to help provide a safe and secure environment conducive to free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law, and the process of reconstruction.

In the wake of the ouster of al Qaida and the Taliban, Afghan leaders met in Bonn, Germany, in December 2001 with international backing to begin the process of rebuilding the country. A new government structure was created in the form of an Afghan Transitional Authority, and an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was created under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1386, 1413 and 1444 to enable the Transitional Authority itself and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to operate in the area of the capital, Kabul, and its surroundings with reasonable security. A detailed Military Technical Agreement between the ISAF Commander and the Afghan Transitional Authority provided further guidance for ISAF operations.



ISAF was initially led by the United Kingdom and then by Turkey. Germany and the Netherlands jointly took over leadership of ISAF in February 2003 and in doing so requested NATO support. In August 2003, the Alliance itself took responsibility for ISAF in such a way that the problem of identifying new countries willing and able to take over the leadership of the mission every six months was overcome.

- The international composition of ISAF has varied but, since its establishment, has included forces or contributions from all 26 NATO Allies and from Albania, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in addition to elements provided by Afghanistan itself.

The North Atlantic Council in consultation provides ISAF's political direction with non-NATO troop-contributing countries. NATO's Allied Command Operations (based at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe located in Mons, Belgium), has responsibility for the operation's headquarters; Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum, in the Netherlands, acts as the operational level headquarters.

Initially, the core of the ISAF headquarters in Kabul was formed Joint Command Centre in Heidelberg, Germany, which provided the ISAF Force Commander. Subsequently, command passed to Canada, the Eurocorps under French command, then to Turkey and then Italy. With its civilian support elements, the overall strength of ISAF approximately 8 000 personnel. A rotation plan has been developed provides for the longer-term support of the ISAF's mission headquarters until February 2008. In January 2004, NATO appointed former Turkish Foreign Minister Cetin as its Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan, with responsibility for advancing political and military aspects of the Alliance's engagement Afghanistan. The Senior Civilian Representative works under the North Atlantic Council and in close co-ordination with the ISAF and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as with authorities and other international bodies present in the country.

In October 2003, UNSC Resolution 1510 opened the way for a wider role for ISAF to support the government of Afghanistan in regions of the country beyond the confines of the



capital. In December 2003, the North Atlantic Council authorised NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe to initiate the expansion process.

- Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs, form the cornerstone of this process. They are teams composed of international civilian and military personnel structured as civil-military partnerships, the military elements of which are integrated into the ISAF chain of command. Their primary role is to help the government of Afghanistan extend its authority further a field and to facilitate the development of security in the regions. This includes establishing relationships with local authorities, enhancing security in their specific areas of operation, supporting security sector reform activities and using the means and capabilities available to them to help facilitate the reconstruction effort in the provinces. The PRT concept is a new one, which is proving to be an efficient and effective means of helping to create a secure environment and enabling lead countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to fulfill their own roles in assisting the government of Afghanistan to rebuild the country.

In December 2003, ISAF took over command of the German-led PRT in Kunduz as the pilot project and first step in the expansion process. By the end of 2004, ISAF had taken command of the military components of five PRTs in the north of Afghanistan, located in Baghlan, Faizabad, Kunduz, Maymaneh and Mazar-e-Sharif. NATO also took responsibility for four PRTs in the west of the country – in Herat, Farah, Chagcharan and Qal'eh-Now – in mid-2005, bringing the total of NATO-led PRTs to nine, covering approximately 50 per cent of Afghanistan's territory. NATO has also decided to take over additional PRTs in the south and east of Afghanistan, which may necessitate greater synergy with the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom. The composition and geographical reach of PRTs are determined by the NATO military authorities and the lead countries, in close consultation with the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan and the Afghan authorities and based on the specific situation in the provinces in which they operate. The specific objectives of individual PRTs take into account such factors as the local security situation, the status of reconstruction, and the presence of other international agencies.



- In addition to the PRTs, there are three other main components of ISAF These are: 1)The ISAF headquarters, which commands the Kabul Multinational Brigade and conducts operational tasks in its area of responsibility, liaising with and assisting in the work of the United Nations, the Afghan authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations and the US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom). 2)The Kabul Multinational Brigade, which is ISAF's tactical headquarters and is responsible for the planning and conduct of patrolling and civil military cooperation operations on a day-to-day basis; and 3) Kabul Afghan International Airport, which is operated by the Afghan Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism with the assistance of ISAF. NATO has an additional role in relation to the rehabilitation of Kabul airport, together with representatives of the other national and international bodies concerned.

ISAF also supported the conduct of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, or grand council, of some 500 Afghan leaders, which was held from December 2003 to early January 2004, and assisted the Afghan authorities in providing security for Kabul throughout the process. The ratification of the new constitution agreed by the Loya Jirga laid the foundation for the creation of democratic institutions and opened the way for free and fair national elections. In response to a request from Afghan President Hamid Karzai, ISAF also provided support during the presidential election period in autumn 2004 and the autumn 200 parliamentary and local elections.

- The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 defines the institutional reforms required to lay the foundation for stability, peace and prosperity in five distinct spheres, namely counter narcotics; judicial reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; training of the Afghan National Army; and training of police forces. Lead donor countries from the G8 countries are assisting the Afghan authorities in carrying out security sector reform programs in these spheres. Japan is the lead country overseeing the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process. The United States is leading international efforts to train the Afghan National Army. Germany has taken the lead in training the Afghan National Police. Italy is the lead country for judicial reform. The United Kingdom is leading international efforts to help combat the production of and trade in narcotics.



- While the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is not part of ISAF's mandate, its implementation impacts significantly on ISAF operations, particularly in and around Kabul. In March 2004, a ceremony outside Kabul marked the successful cantonment in safe storage sites of heavy weapons such as tanks, artillery pieces, surface-to-surface missiles and rocket-launching systems held by different militias in the capital. Initiated the Afghan Ministry of Defence, the cantonment operates under a dual-key system and prevents the removal of these weapons without the agreement of both the Ministry and the ISAF Commander. A similar initiative implemented the Panjsher Valley and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process applied to armed groups in the country combine to form an integrated program designed to bring the large number of weapons circulating in Afghanistan under control.

### *Revised operational plan for NATO's expanded mission in Afghanistan*

On 8 December 2005, NATO Foreign Ministers endorsed a revised Operational Plan, prepared by NATO's Military Authorities, which will guide the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in assisting the Afghan Government to extend and exercise its authority and influence across the country. The Plan addresses the tasks and challenges ISAF faces as it expands its area of operations to the south and subsequently to the east of the country.

It provides the strategic focus to create the conditions for stabilisation and reconstruction across the country. It recognizes the primacy of the Afghan Government and the paramount importance of continued, coherent and consistent development of Afghan political institutions and security capability. In addition, it outlines clear arrangements for enhanced coordination and deconfliction between ISAF's stabilisation mission and the Coalition counter-terrorism mission. It also highlights the need for ISAF to cooperate effectively with the other key international community agencies in Afghanistan, notably the UN, the EU, the G8 lead nations and the NGO community.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will continue to be at the leading edge of NATO's effort in Afghanistan. As such, ISAF stability operations will be used to create the environment required to enable reconstruction and nation building activities to continue.



ISAF's key military tasks include: Assisting the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country; conducting stability and security operations in co-ordination with the Afghan national security forces; assisting the Afghan government with the security sector reform process; mentoring and supporting the Afghan national army; supporting Afghan government programs to disarm illegally armed groups. ISAF's key supporting tasks include: Supporting Afghan government and internationally sanctioned counter-narcotics efforts within limits (NOT participating in poppy eradication or destruction of processing facilities or taking military action against narcotics producers); on request, providing support to humanitarian assistance operations co-ordinated by Afghan government organisations; supporting the Afghan national police, within means and capabilities.

In order to achieve this variety of tasks ISAF has established additional PRT's and Regional Area Commands. Additional forces and supporting elements had also been provided to ISAF as it expanded into the more operationally challenging environments in the south and east of the country.

The last expansion of the operational mandate took place on July 31 2006 concerning the south and Stage 4, meaning expansion to the east, took place on October 5 2006. Now, ISAF's area of operations covers all of Afghanistan, as five Regional commands were established at: Mazar-e Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Bagram for ISAF Regions North, West, South and East respectively and one for the capital, Kabul. ISAF operational mentoring and liaison teams were deployed to assist Afghan National Army units at various levels of command. These are small groups of experienced officers and NCOs who coach and mentor the Afghan National Army units to which they are attached. Finally, the force was increased by 23,000 troops, bringing the total number to approximately 32,000.

## **Problems and conclusions**

NATO's mission, however, has not been without challenges, particularly when it comes to fielding expeditionary capabilities. In August of 2006, with deadly attacks against NATO troops on the rise, NATO's top commander, General James L. Jones, asked allies to send an additional 2,500



troops to combat Taliban forces in southern Afghanistan. The deafening silence that followed raised questions about whether NATO had the political will and adequate capabilities to succeed.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, European countries at both national level and inside international organizations such as NATO and the EU have issued dozens of strategy documents, outlining the need for enhanced capabilities to combat terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), deal with failed or failing states, contend with regional conflicts, and respond to humanitarian crises or other challenges. Transformation from static Cold War militaries into leaner forces has also been a priority for NATO countries for years. Despite these goals, defense spending in most European countries remains flat or in decline with few signs of increased funding in the next five years.

The reasons for this are clear. First, defense spending remains in fierce competition with growing social spending requirements. Second, European investments in new capabilities are constrained by the fragmented nature of European defense demands. The thicket of rules and regulations that govern European defense trade and industrial capabilities are focused largely on legacy platforms and job creation rather than transformation. Some progress has been made in recent years with the creation of a European Defense Agency, but it remains to be seen if national militaries will offer up substantial projects for open competition. Finally, conscription or universal service requirements in some European countries require substantial personnel and benefit outlays on troops, which often detract from research and development investments.

With some countries spending as little as 1.4 percent of GDP on defense (despite NATO's stated target of at least 2 percent), Europe's progress on creating forces prepared for expeditionary operations such as the NATO mission in Afghanistan has been slow. Only a small percentage of Europe's roughly 2 million troops are deployable. Estimates range from 3 to 5 percent. Those European troops that are deployable are often tasked with peacekeeping or stabilization missions because they are simply not equipped and trained for high-intensity combat.

In other cases, particularly in Germany, the decision not to send troops into combat in southern Afghanistan is rooted more in politics than preparedness. German political elites firmly believe that the public will not stomach soldiers coming back in body bags, but will rally behind more benign



and safe humanitarian deployments. Germany is not alone, however, in setting firm guidelines for how and when their troops can be used for NATO operations. Several other members of the Alliance place their troops under strict national caveats concerning the rules of engagement or geographical mobility, which limits their utility for fast paced combat operations where allies have to come together on short notice to face an adaptive adversary. As a result, only a small number of NATO countries have both the capabilities and the political will undertaken and sustain high intensity combat operations.

Today, approximately 7,000 troops from Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands are fending off the Taliban resurgence in the south. As the security situation worsens, calls from those three countries for other NATO members to assist have grown louder. Why, they ask, should a minority of NATO members carry out the majority of combat tasks? France and Germany argue that they are already overstretched with other peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Congo, and elsewhere, preventing them from sending more troops.

It is important to note that European reluctance to commit substantial troops to combat operations in Afghanistan is also tied to the current mood in Europe towards the war on terror. The widespread perception that the United States abandoned Afghanistan to pursue the unpopular Iraq war makes the prospect of casualties in Afghanistan doubly daunting for European governments. There is an undercurrent of resentment among European leaders who feel they are being repeatedly asked to clean up a problem that the Iraq war in part created, or at least made worse. It is also worth noting that NATO has been ringing the alarm bells about its under-supported ISAF mission and the credibility of the alliance since 2003. Some European politicians may be desensitized to these pleas at precisely the worst time and when NATO needs their support most. Canadian, British, and Dutch military leaders warn, however, that if additional countries do not step forward with troops and much-needed capabilities such as tactical airlift in the coming months, the mission could fail.

In addition to its search for more ISAF contributors inside the Alliance, NATO is currently looking for ways to strengthen its coordination on the ground with civilian and humanitarian organizations. As was the case in Afghanistan, coordination often starts only after forces arrive in theatre, which wastes precious time, leads to duplication of effort, and creates confusion for local



actors. In the future, NATO will need to build habits of cooperation before crises arise to improve unity of effort on the ground and enhance the effectiveness of NATO operations.

- In the short term, NATO's Secretary General is calling for the European Union, the World Bank, and the UN to join forces with the Alliance to coordinate current military and civilian operations. While NATO troops have been busy defeating insurgent forces, stabilization efforts have remained stagnant. As a result, short-term military gains rarely lead to long-term stability because they are not followed up with proper reconstruction funds or the deployment of Afghan security forces.
- Most experts agree that both reconstruction and security must be pursued simultaneously but there is no agreement, particularly among NATO allies, on what model to use to do so. Given their success in other parts of the country, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) are frequently cited as the best path forward, but the current combat environment prevents civilian players from operating effectively in many areas in the south. The PRTs also run on six-month command cycles, far from ideal for developing long-term solutions. Another option would be to give NATO a greater reconstruction role, although several allies are uncomfortable with this prospect. For now, NATO is calling on the EU to take over the training of police forces, a task that Germany has been handling with some success but on a scale that is much too small for the country's security needs. Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Jones has called the training to date "disappointing and inadequate."<sup>3</sup> The approaching winter weather – when fighting usually subsides due to the bitter temperatures – will provide NATO and other organizations on the ground with a much-needed pause to develop additional strategies to bridge the stabilization and reconstruction gap.
- Some NATO watchers believe the ISAF mission marks the birth of a "global NATO" that is willing and able to face a wide range of 21<sup>st</sup> century threats. However, a number of NATO member states, particularly France, remain deeply uncomfortable with this notion and are urging the Alliance to return to its core mission of collective defense or Article V mission. French President, Jacques Chirac, explicitly made this point before a forum of French Ambassadors on August 28, 2006: "In a few weeks' time, the NATO Summit will be taking



place in Riga. We want this meeting to be a success and to mark a further milestone in the adaptation of the Alliance. We will achieve this by upholding NATO's legitimacy as a military organization guaranteeing the collective security of the European and North American allies. To seek to involve the Alliance in non-military missions, ad hoc partnerships, technological ventures or an insufficiently prepared enlargement could only distort its purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

NATO's recently drafted Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG), which was formally endorsed by Heads of State at the NATO Summit in Riga, last November, is supposed to help reconcile the diverging views inside the Alliance on NATO's overarching purpose. The five-page document does cite a range of threats the Alliance might face in the future, including the proliferation of WMD, failing states, the misuse of emerging technologies, and the disruption of vital resources but it remains vague on NATO's future roles and mission. Traditionalists will note that the CPG reaffirms the continuing relevance and importance of Article V. Globalists, or those with a more ambitious vision for NATO's future, will be relieved to see that the CPG also stresses that the Alliance should be prepared for missions that include those that are asymmetric or fall outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Both camps, therefore, will interpret the CPG differently and the question as to whether or not NATO's current mission in Afghanistan is a precedent or exception will remain unanswered.

Events in Afghanistan are reaching a critical juncture, and European politics and perceptions, as well as United States commitments in Iraq, may prevent NATO from getting the assets necessary to ensure victory. The resurgence of the Taliban and weakness of the central government in Afghanistan will continue to threaten global security without aggressive support from the West, particularly NATO and the EU. Afghanistan is far from a lost cause, but the substantial progress and promise envisioned after the fall of Kabul is slowly being reversed. The unwillingness or inability to raise the necessary forces that General Jones called for is not surprising, but failure to meet this commitment will have drastic consequences both for Afghanistan and for NATO itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by President Jacques Chirac at the opening of the Fourteenth Ambassadors' Conference, Paris, August 28 2006, transcript available at, <[www.ambafranceus.org/news/standpoint/stand174.asp](http://www.ambafranceus.org/news/standpoint/stand174.asp)> (October 25 2006).