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Petraeus Arrives in Afghanistan as Taliban Attack

New U.S. commander Gen. David Petraeus arrived in Afghanistan on July 2 to assume command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) — the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan established in 2001 by the UN Security Council through Resolution 1386.



In a pre-dawn attack launched earlier that day, Taliban militants in the northern city of Kunduz attacked the compound of Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI), a the United States Agency for International Aid (USAID contractor), killing at least five people and wounding 24 others.

VOA News reported that the victims included an Afghan police officer and an Afghan security guard, as well as three foreign workers from Germany, Britain, and the Philippines. All of the attackers were killed in a gun-battle with Afghan security forces that lasted more than five hours.

The AP reported that the attack was carried out by six suicide bombers wearing explosive vests who stormed the compound, with at least five other attackers then running inside the building, killing or wounding security guards and others inside before dying in a gun battle with Afghan security forces.

The report quoted Gen. Abdul Razaq Yaqoubi, police chief in Kunduz province, who said: "It was 3 o'clock in the morning, close to the morning prayer time, when a suicide bomber in a 4×4 vehicle exploded his vehicle." Yaqoubi said the explosion occurred as Afghan national security forces fought to kill the last surviving attacker and noted: "There [was] no way for him to escape."

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told AP in Kabul that six suicide bombers attacked what he called a "training center" for Afghan security forces in Kunduz and killed 55 foreigners — apparently a greatly exaggerated claim.

Steven O'Connor, Director of Communications for DAI, noted that all four of those killed at the company's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) Program office worked for DAI's security subcontractor, Edinburgh International (EI). O'Connor explained LGCD's mission in Afghanistan as follows:

Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), LGCD works to extend the reach of the Afghan government. It engages local governments and communities in promoting their own development, thereby building the credibility of local authorities and contributing to stabilization by offering a viable governance alternative in places susceptible to the influence of anti-government elements.

Preceding General Petraeus's arrival in Afghanistan by a matter of hours, the attack underscored the difficulty of the NATO mission in the besieged country.

On his way from the United States to Afghanistan, Petraeus visited NATO Headquarters in Brussels,



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where he met with the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and addressed the North Atlantic Council and representatives of the ISAF troop contributing nations.

A report on [NATO's website](#) quoted from the general's statements, and said he "insisted that this was a change of command, not a change of strategy, and that all 46 nations had reaffirmed their full support to the mission."

The report noted that General Petraeus stressed the importance of civil-military partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other key stakeholders, saying: "All of us recognize the imperative of linking arms and making way together. We must achieve unity of effort."

Looking at his goals for 2010, General Petraeus also outlined his goals for 2010 to NATO officials: "We will look into the expansion of security; the performance of the Afghan national security forces and their growth, not only in terms of numbers but also in capacity; and we will look into complementary activities in terms of governance and the delivery of basic services."

For those unaware of the NATO-UN connection, the general's statements during his visit to NATO help reveal that the ongoing war in Afghanistan is very much a UN operation, as were the wars waged explicitly under UN command in Korea, and — though UN's now-defunct NATO-like regional arrangement, SEATO — in Vietnam.

General Petraeus is scheduled to appear with U.S. ambassador Karl Eikenberry on July 3 at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, and a formal change-of-command ceremony will be held in the next few days.

Petraeus, Eikenberry, and Petraeus's successor, General Stanley McChrystal, are all members of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations, whose members were instrumental in establishing the United Nations in 1945.

Photo: General David Petraeus speaks during a joint media conference with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (out of picture) at NATO headquarters in Brussels on July 1, 2010: AP Images



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