



Written by on June 11, 2010

## NATO Offers Mixed Signals on Afghanistan

AP reported statements from NATO leaders on June 11 declaring that the alliance had “regained the initiative” in the Afghan war, along with promises that the gains could result in a handover of security responsibilities to Afghan authorities by the end of 2010.

Among those quoted was Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who urged other NATO Defense Ministers to take advantage of current favorable conditions by providing the resources needed to accelerate efforts to bolster Afghan security forces. The NATO command has stated its intention that Afghan troops replace NATO forces in the war against the Taliban, making it possible to implement any exit strategy that NATO may have planned.



"Our effort is moving in right direction [but] the road ahead will be long and hard," Gates said after a meeting of NATO's 28 Defense Ministers. "I hope that by the end of year, we will be able to demonstrate that we are making progress throughout the country."

The reported also quoted a statement made the same day by NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who told Ministers that the Afghan government and NATO would soon agree on how to start handing over responsibility for security to Afghans "province by province."

Another report from AFP quoted from a statement made by NATO Defense Ministers at a two-day meeting in Brussels with their counterparts from non-NATO nations contributing troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF): "Operations across Afghanistan are making measured progress in extending the reach of the Afghan government, changing the political conditions, and marginalizing the insurgency."

The Ministers cited "particular efforts in Central Helmand and Kandahar," where the International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] has focused its efforts over the past year.

"Significant challenges remain, and success is not yet assured," the [statement](#) said, "but we are encouraged by recent results."

A report about the meeting posted on NATO's website noted that "discussions [between NATO and non-NATO Ministers] focused on the process of transition to Afghan lead and the steps to be taken to drive it forward, particularly in terms of training the Afghan security forces."

The NATO report continued:

The meeting began with a briefing by the ISAF Commander, General Stanley McChrystal, on the progress of operations. He explained that the current strategy is working but warned that progress towards real stability will be slow and deliberate in order to make sure that hard-won



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progress is enduring.

NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, Ambassador Mark Sedwill, set out how the Alliance will work with the Afghan government to regain the political initiative as operational conditions improve enough to enable transition to Afghan lead.

What General McChrystal heard from 46 nations around the table was equally straightforward: *ISAF will stay as long as necessary* because a stable, sovereign Afghanistan means a safer world for all. [Emphasis added.]

NATO Secretary General Rasmussen, noted the article on the alliance's website, "also highlighted three fundamental elements with regard to transition. 'First, *transition does not mean withdrawal of our forces*. It means shifting towards supporting Afghan forces, towards long-term training, mentoring and capacity building. Second, the military and civilian conditions have to be in place for transition to be irreversible. And third, we want those conditions to be in place as soon as possible,' he said." (Emphasis added.)

Western intervention in Afghanistan began shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, when U.S. and British air forces began bombing the nation as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Since the al-Qaeda terrorists involved in 9/11 had been given a safe base of operations by the country's Taliban government, the military operation had been organized to eliminate that safe haven. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established by the UN Security Council in December 2001, to secure the capital of Kabul and surrounding areas, but in 2003, the Security Council authorized the expansion of the ISAF mission throughout Afghanistan.

NATO involvement in Afghanistan was justified by the 9/11 attacks, after which NATO invoked Article 5 of the NATO Charter for the first time in its history. Article 5 states that "an armed attack against any one or more of [the member nations] shall be considered an attack against them all." NATO was originally presented as a means to defend Western Europe against possible Soviet aggression during the Cold War. It's stated mission has obviously expanded well beyond that function.

A largely unknown fact about NATO is that it is a subsidiary of the United Nations. The NATO Charter, signed by its 12 original member nations, notes that the pact derives its legitimacy from the UN. Article I of the NATO Charter states:

The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

This means that U.S. forces in Afghanistan are serving in a UN-authorized mission whose ultimate leader, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, is a Dane.

Every war that has engaged U.S. troops since the end of World War II — the last war for which Congress issued a declaration of war, as the Constitution requires — has been fought under the auspices of the UN or one of its "regional arrangements," as defined by Chapter VII, Article 52.1 of the UN Charter.

The Korean War was overtly a UN-controlled military operation, the war in Vietnam was fought under



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the auspices of SEATO, the war in Bosnia was fought under NATO “authority,” the invasion of Iraq was justified because of Saddam Hussein’s violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1441 and President Bush sought and obtained additional “authorization” from the UN, and the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, as we have seen was established by the UN Security Council.

Contrary to its founders’ claims that the UN would be an institution to maintain world peace, it has constantly been the means by which the nations of the world willing to join its “regional arrangements” could wage war — mainly against those nations audacious enough to defy UN authority.

*Photo: NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, right, gestures while speaking with top U.S. NATO commander in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal during a meeting of NATO defense ministers and non-NATO ISAF contributors at NATO headquarters in Brussels on June 11, 2010: AP Images*



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