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Petraeus Prepares for Afghan Military Buildup

Following frequent attacks by Taliban militants upon U.S. supply convoys enroute to landlocked Afghanistan from northwestern Pakistan, the U.S. military has sought to find new routes into the mountainous nation from the north.

Reuters news service reported that Petraeus arrived in Kabul on January 20 and, according to U.S. military reports, left Afghanistan shortly after his meeting with Karzai. Prior to his trip to Afghanistan, Petraeus had made stops in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, all located to Afghanistan's north, and in Pakistan, to Afghanistan's east.



Gen. Petraeus

Following Petraeus' visit, Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Khamrokhon Zarifi told reporters that he and Tajikistan's President Imomali Rakhmon will soon visit Brussels, where an agreement on the transit of NATO supplies via their nations to Afghanistan may be finalized. "During our visit to Europe, to Brussels, next month we will finalize the negotiation process," Zarifi told reporters in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital.

Agence France Presse quoted President Karzai's spokesman, Hodayun Hamidzada, who said that Karzai had re-issued a call for "reviewing the war in Afghanistan — how we do it, where we do it, the issue of minimizing civilian casualties, and empowering the Afghan forces with training and equipment."

During his visit to Pakistan, Gen. Petraeus announced that the United States has secured extra supply routes for the NATO forces fighting in Afghanistan in agreements made with the other Central Asian states he had visited, as well as with Russia. A spokesman at the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, Lou Finton, stated that Petraeus had arrived in the Pakistani capital for "scheduled meetings with senior Pakistani civilian and military government officials on issues of joint concern."

The Pakistani Internet magazine *Dawn* reported on January 20 that after meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, General Petraeus stated: "It is clearly in the interest of all countries involved that Pakistan succeeds in dealing with its internal problems."

Petraeus told reporters in Islamabad that his discussions with Pakistan's leaders focused on ways the United States and the international community could assist Pakistan in acting against the militants in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the North-West Frontier Province, and other parts of the country bordering Afghanistan. He said the United States could help the "new democracy get itself established as it undertakes the difficult decisions that it has recently reached to be in compliance with the International Monetary Fund agreement."

Dawn reported that Petraeus said his talks with his Pakistani hosts included specifying ways to coordinate operations between Pakistani and U.S. military units, so that their missions in eastern



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Afghanistan and western Pakistan could work together to prevent the cross-border movement of militants who moved back and forth along the Pakistan-Afghan border to strike targets in both countries.

Back on December 11, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who will stay on in that post in the Obama administration, told reporters onboard a plane headed for Afghanistan that the United States intends to send an additional 20,000 troops to Afghanistan over a 12- to 18-month period. The additional forces will increase the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to about 58,000. Gates told reporters at the time: "We're going to try and get two additional brigade combat teams, in response to [U.S. General David McKiernan's] request, into Afghanistan by summertime."

On his way to Afghanistan last December, the defense secretary's plane made a brief stop at Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan, the base from which U.S. flights into Afghanistan are dispatched. While at the base, Gates told U.S. troops: "The final decision will be made by the next president, but a consensus has emerged that more troops are needed." Gates also warned that "success in Afghanistan will not come easily or quickly."

Both General Petraeus and Secretary Gates are members of the Council on Foreign Relations, a New York-based organization that has promoted internationalism and the ceding of U.S. power to the UN, NATO, and other multinational bodies. UN authority was instrumental in waging the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, and the operation in Afghanistan is controlled by NATO.



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