



Updated: 20-Nov-2006

## ISAF Forces in Afghanistan

20-Nov-2006

2006 - BG001

### General Information

NATO took command and co-ordination of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in August 2003; NATO's first mission outside the Euro-Atlantic area. ISAF operates in Afghanistan under a UN mandate and will continue to operate according to current and future UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. ISAF's mission was initially limited to Kabul; Resolution 1510 passed by the UNSC on 13 October 2003 opened the way to a wider role for ISAF to support the Government of Afghanistan beyond Kabul. Since then ISAF has expanded its operation into the whole of the country.

### ISAF's Role

ISAF's role is to assist the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community in maintaining security within its area of operations. ISAF supports the Government of Afghanistan in extending its authority to the rest of the country, and in providing a safe and secure environment conducive to stronger democratic governance, the spread of the rule of law, and the reconstruction of the country.

### ISAF's Main Tasks

ISAF conducts security presence patrols throughout Kabul and its surrounding areas and within the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) areas of operation. Operations in support of National Security Forces can also involve the clearance and destruction of unexploded ordnance or material, which could be used for improvised explosive devices. This is essential for the long-term security of Afghanistan.

ISAF coordinates Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) projects throughout its areas of operation. CIMIC objectives are to assist Commander ISAF and the commanders of ISAF's PRTs in their efforts to support the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) in maintaining and expanding security throughout the country, to support stabilisation, reconstruction and nation-building activities, and to co-operate with the International Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

CIMIC teams work in close co-operation with the local population and authorities to assess the situation concerning education, health, water, sanitation and internally displaced persons and returnees. CIMIC teams also initiate and monitor projects funded by either national or international donors.

On a political level, ISAF works closely with the Afghan authorities, the United

Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), UN agencies, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and US-led Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan (CFC-A). ISAF has Liaison Teams that coordinate issues directly with the GoA, UNAMA and other international players. ISAF also supports the GoA in its security sector reform efforts.

### **ISAF Units**

**ISAF Headquarters** - provides operational-level direction and planning support to ISAF subordinate units who conduct operational tasks within their areas of operation. ISAF HQ staff coordinates with, and assists the GoA, international community and governmental and non-governmental organisations and also assists and supports the work of UNAMA.

**Air Task Force (ATF)** - is responsible for planning, coordinating and conducting air operations in Afghanistan. The force also, executes Airspace Management, operates an ISAF Combined Rescue Co-ordination Centre, and conducts intra-theatre medical evacuation for ISAF personnel. Kabul International Airport (KAIA) is the primary international airfield in the country and services more than 140 commercial and military flights each day. ISAF assists the Afghan Ministry of Transport in the overall operation of the airport and facilitates its ongoing improvements.

**Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)** - PRTs are arranged as civil-military partnerships to facilitate the development of a secure environment, extend Government authority and assist reconstruction in the Afghan regions. Currently under ISAF command there are five PRTs in the north of the country in Konduz, Pol-e Khomri, Meymaneh, Mazar-e Sharif and Feyzabad. There are four PRTs in the west of the country in Herat, Qaleh-ye Now, Chaghcharan and Farah. There are five PRTs in the south of the country in Kandahar, Lashkar Gah, Qalat and Tarin Kowt. There are twelve PRTs in the East of the country in Khowst, Sharan, Ghazni, Bamyán, Panjshir, Mihtarlam, Asadabad, Gardez, Jalalabad, Nurestan and Wardak.

**Regional Commands (RCs)** - RCs coordinate all regional civil-military activities conducted by the military elements of the PRTs in their area of responsibility, under operational control of ISAF. They were created to facilitate regional control as ISAF expands and to support the PRTs. ISAF currently operates RCs in the Kabul, in the North at Mazar-e Sharif with Germany as the lead nation, in the West at Herat with Italy as the lead nation, in the South at Kandahar with the Netherlands as the lead nation and in the East at Bagram with the United States as the lead nation.

**Forward Support Bases (FSBs)** - FSBs are essential logistic installations, created to provide supply, medical and transport hubs in each region to assist the PRTs in their mission to extend the Government of Afghanistan's authority. ISAF currently operates FSBs in the North at Mazar-e Sharif with Germany as the lead nation, in the West at Herat with Spain as lead nation, in the South at Kandahar with the Netherlands as the lead nation and in the East at Bagram with the United States as the lead nation.

### **NATO Management of ISAF**

Political direction and coordination for the ISAF mission comes from the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which is NATO's highest decision-making body. The NAC works in close consultation with non-NATO nations taking part in ISAF and special meetings with participant nations are held on a regular basis.

Based on the political guidance provided by the NAC, strategic command and

control is exercised by NATO's main military headquarters, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, which is led by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). The Joint Force Commander (JFC) based at the Joint Force Command in Brunssum, in the Netherlands, is responsible for the operational level manning, training, deployment and sustainment of ISAF.

### **NATO Senior Civilian Representative**

The NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) in Afghanistan is responsible for advancing the political-military aspects of the Alliance's engagement in Afghanistan and receives his guidance from the North Atlantic Council (NAC). The work carried out by the SCR is crucial to the success of NATO's mission of assisting the Government of Afghanistan. The SCR works in close co-ordination with the Commander of ISAF (COMISAF) and the UNAMA, as well as with the Afghan authorities and other bodies of the International Community present in the country.

In January 2004, Minister Hikmet Cetin, of Turkey, was appointed to the post of SCR.

Ambassador Daan Everts became the SCR on 24th August 2006.

### **ISAF Support to the Government of Afghanistan & International Community**

In January 2004, ISAF successfully supported the conduct of a major political event in Kabul, the convening of a Constitutional Loya Jirga, a grand council specific to Afghanistan, which adopted a new constitution for the country. ISAF assisted the Afghan authorities in providing security throughout the process.

In October of 2004, ISAF also provided support for the successful democratic Presidential Elections, which saw the inauguration of President Hamid Karzai on 9 October 2004.

ISAF assists the Afghan Ministry Transport in the overall operation of the Kabul International Airport and conducts daily military flight and logistics operations at the airfield.

ISAF has been helping to train and build up future Afghan security forces. This has involved assisting individual lead-nations in the training and development of the new Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. As well as opportunity training initiatives such as training Afghan Army Engineers.

ISAF worked closely with the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations to support the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) process. The DDR process was initiated with a pilot project in October of 2003 and aimed at the disarmament and demobilisation of former combatants prior to their reintegration into Afghan society.

ISAF supported Afghanistan's National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections on 18 September 2005, including the deployment of a 2000-strong Election Support Force throughout the period. ISAF and the international community maintained close involvement in planning for the successful process to elect the Wolesi and Mishrano Jirgas, the lower and upper parliamentary bodies, and their inauguration in December 2005.

### **ISAF Support to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)**

## **Programme**

The DDR process was a programme run by the Government of Afghanistan under the auspices of UNAMA and the Afghan New Beginnings Programme. At the end of the programme, more than 61,000 former Afghan combatants and soldiers were disarmed and demobilised in Afghanistan. Of those demobilised, more than 60,000 have entered into New Beginnings Programme for reintegration, mostly through agriculture retraining programs.

## **ISAF Support to Heavy Weapons Cantonment**

The redeployment and cantonment of heavy weapons was an initiative of the Afghan Ministry of Defence. Under the terms of the Military Technical Agreement between ISAF and the Government of Afghanistan, ISAF supported the Afghan Ministry of Defence in its efforts to carry forward the cantonment of heavy weapons outside Kabul city limits.

Altogether more than 10,000 heavy weapons were cantoned and more than 34,000 light weapons taken out of public circulation.

## **ISAF's Expansion in Afghanistan**

ISAF's mandate was initially limited to security assistance to the Kabul Area of Operations. Resolution 1510 passed by the UNSC on 13 October 2003 opened the way to a wider role for ISAF to support the Government of Afghanistan beyond Kabul.

Following this resolution, NATO has progressively expanded its operation outside the Kabul area; in 2004 into the provinces in the North and, in 2005, into the West, in July 2006 NATO expanded into the South and in October 2006 into the East to establish a current total of twenty-five PRTs and their supporting structures.

This expansion will be structured to maintain the focus on the PRT system and will take the NATO-led operation into new territory, where it will be equipped and supported accordingly, with the appropriate rules of engagement, to fulfil its mandate and the security assistance mission.

The revised operation plan recognises the primacy of the Afghan Government and the paramount importance of continued and coherent development of Afghan political institutions and security capability. As part of this revision, the force will provide more support to the Afghan National Army and Police. It will deploy its Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) with Afghan troops and assist in training, providing support and niche training to the Police.

## **ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)**

PRTs are structured as a civil-military partnership and they demonstrate the commitment of the International Community to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Only the military elements of PRTs are integrated in the ISAF chain of command. The primary purposes of PRTs are:

- To help the Government of Afghanistan extend its authority.
- To facilitate the development of a secure environment in the Afghan regions, including the establishment of relationships with local authorities.
- To support, as appropriate, security sector reform activities, within means and capabilities, to facilitate the reconstruction effort.

**Location of ISAF's PRTs**

<b>Northern PRTs</b>	<b>Lead nation</b>	<b>Western PRTs</b>	<b>Lead Nation</b>
Mazar-e Sharif	Sweden	Herat	Italy
Meymana	Norway	Qaleh-ye-Now	Spain
Feyzabad	Germany	Farah	United States
Pol-e-Khomri	Hungary	Chagcharan	Lithuania
Konduz	Germany		
<b>Eastern PRTs</b>	<b>Lead nation</b>	<b>Southern PRTs</b>	<b>Lead nation</b>
Bamyan	New Zealand	Kandahar	Canada
Bagram	United States	Lashkar Gah	United Kingdom
Khowst	United States	Qalat	United States
Sharan	United States	Tarin Kowt	The Netherlands
Ghazni	United States		
Panjshir	United States		
Mihtarlam	United States		
Asadabad	United States		
Gardez	United States		
Jalalabad	United States		
Nurestan	United States		
Wardak	Turkey		

**ISAF's continuing mandate**

ISAF was created in accordance with Agreements resulting from the Bonn Conference, December 2001, after the ousting of the Taliban regime. Afghan opposition leaders attending the conference began the process of reconstructing their country by setting up a new government structure, namely the Government of Afghanistan.

The concept of an UN-mandated international force to assist the newly established Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) was also launched to create a secure environment in and around Kabul and support the reconstruction of Afghanistan. These agreements paved the way for the creation of a three-way partnership between the previous ATA (in force before Oct 2004), UNAMA and ISAF.

ISAF is not a UN force, but it is deployed under a mandate of the United Nations Security Council (seven UNSC Resolutions - 1386, 1413, 1444, 1510, 1563, 1623, 1659 and 1707 - relate to ISAF). A detailed Military Technical Agreement between the ISAF Commander and the Government of Afghanistan provides additional guidance for ISAF operations.

During the Afghanistan Conference held in London on 31 January – 1 February 2006, NATO reconfirmed its long-term commitment to Afghanistan. The international donors present at the conference agreed a five-year "Afghanistan Compact", which commits both the Afghan government and the international community to benchmarks in areas such as security, economic development and better governance.

**Command Lead of ISAF**

Initially, individual nations volunteered to lead the ISAF mission every six months.

The first ISAF mission was run by the United Kingdom, and Turkey assumed the lead of the second ISAF mission. The third ISAF mission was led by Germany along with the Netherlands with support from NATO.

NATO has led the ISAF mission since 11 August 2003, financed by common funding and the troop-contributing nations. NATO is responsible for the command, coordination and planning of the force. This includes providing the force commander and ISAF Headquarters in Kabul.

NATO's role in assuming the leadership of ISAF in August 2003 overcame the problem of a continual search to find new nations to lead the mission and the difficulties of setting up a new headquarters every six months in a complex and dynamic Afghan environment. A continuing headquarters also enables small countries, which find it difficult to act as lead nations, to play a strong role within a multinational headquarters.

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