



## Afghanistan: The Timetable for Security Transition

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Over the course of 2010 plans were put in place to strengthen the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces, in order for the transition of security responsibility and the drawdown of Coalition forces from mid-2011 onwards.

As part of that new counterinsurgency strategy, a surge of 30,000 US and 10,000 additional Coalition forces were deployed to the country in the first half of 2010, which brought the total ISAF force to approximately 132,000 personnel by year end.

The timetable for drawing down ISAF forces by the end of 2014 was endorsed at the NATO Heads of State and Government Summit in Lisbon in November 2010. Within that overall timetable for transition, several Coalition countries have announced plans to gradually withdraw their forces over the next few years, dependent upon conditions on the ground. The latest partner to set out its withdrawal plans is the United States, which announced on 22 June 2011 that it would withdraw 10,000 troops by the end of 2011 and a further 22,000 by the end of summer 2012.

This note examines the timetable for transferring security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces, the current commitment of contributing nations, and any plans for withdrawal.

Developments in the military campaign in Afghanistan over the course of 2010 are examined in Library briefing SN/IA/5678, [Afghanistan: Towards a Handover of Security Responsibility](#).

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## **1 Background**

### **1.1 ISAF Mandate**

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 of December 2001 laid down the initial mandate for a 5,000-strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to deploy to the region in, and immediately around, Kabul, in order to provide security and to assist in the reconstruction of the country under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

While UN mandated, the ISAF force is not, however, deployed under the guise of the UN. In November 2001 the then UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, recommended, as part of his wider proposals that led to the Bonn Agreement, that a new security force for Afghanistan be established. He also suggested, however, that a UN peacekeeping force could not be recommended, partly because of the time it would take to form and partly because:

UN peacekeepers have proven most successful when deployed to implement an existing political settlement among willing parties - not to serve as a substitute for one. Any security force established in the absence of a credible cease-fire agreement or

political settlement, whether constituted by Afghans, international personnel, or both, could quickly find itself in the role of combatant. This is not a role for 'Blue Helmets.'<sup>1</sup>

Until August 2003 when NATO assumed command, the ISAF operation was subsequently conducted as a UN-mandated coalition of the willing.

Since UNSCR 1386, the UN Security Council has adopted several resolutions extending the deployment of ISAF, including UNSCR 1510 in October 2003 which expanded the ISAF mandate to cover the whole of Afghanistan and thereby lay the groundwork for ISAF commanders to expand operations beyond Kabul.

UN Security Council Resolution 2011 (2011) currently authorises the presence of ISAF until 13 October 2012.<sup>2</sup>

A detailed Military Technical Agreement agreed between the ISAF Commander and the Afghan Transitional Authority in January 2002 provides additional guidance for ISAF operations.

## **1.2 Mission**

NATO's main role in Afghanistan is to assist the Afghan Government in exercising and extending its authority across the country and creating a secure environment with a view to paving the way for reconstruction and effective governance. ISAF is a key component in achieving those aims and has the following mission objectives:

- Conducting stability and security operations throughout the country in coordination with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), an increasing number of which are being led by the ANSF.
- Through the NATO Training Mission (NTM-A), ISAF forces are mentoring, training and equipping the ANSF, to enable the international community to gradually hand over security responsibility to the Afghans. This is being done in partnership with the United States, which runs its training and equipping activities through the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan (CSTC-A). ISAF also works in co-ordination in the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL).<sup>3</sup>

ISAF troop contributing nations have deployed a number of Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) and Police OMLTs (POMLTs) which are embedded in ANA and ANP units to support training and deploy on operations in an advisory role. Equipping the ANSF is co-ordinated by the NATO Equipment Donation Programme and supported by the ANA Trust Fund which covers the transportation and installation costs of equipment donations, the purchase of equipment, the purchase of services for engineering and construction projects, and training, both inside and outside Afghanistan.

- Supporting the Afghan government in Disarming Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG).
- Facilitating the management of ANA ammunition depots. NATO administers a trust fund project, agreed between the Afghan government, ISAF nations and the NATO

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<sup>1</sup> [www.un.org/news/dh/latest/afghan/brahimi-sc-briefing.htm](http://www.un.org/news/dh/latest/afghan/brahimi-sc-briefing.htm)

<sup>2</sup> A copy of UNSCR 2011 is available online at: [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc\\_resolutions11.htm](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions11.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Further information on EUPOL is available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1268&lang=fr>

Maintenance and Supply Agency, aimed at enhancing the physical security of ANA ammunition depots and at supporting the development of the ANA's ammunition stockpile management capabilities.

- Providing humanitarian assistance through the Post-Operations Humanitarian Relief Fund which has been established since 2006. The fund provides rapid assistance in the immediate aftermath of significant ISAF military operations. Assistance includes the provision of food, shelter and medicines as well as the repair of buildings or key infrastructure. Such assistance is provided on a short-term basis and responsibility is handed over to the civil sector as soon as circumstances permit. The fund consists entirely of voluntary donations from ISAF troop contributing nations.
- Identifying reconstruction needs, such as the rehabilitation of schools and medical facilities, restoring water supplies and providing support for other civil-military projects. Through its Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ISAF is supporting reconstruction and development and securing areas in which reconstruction work is being undertaken by other national and international actors. PRTs consist of both civilian and military personnel. While a PRT's civilian components lead on political, economic, humanitarian and social aspects of the PRT's work in support of the Afghan Government's development priorities, the military components of the PRT focus on increasing security and stability in the area, building security sector capacity and directing military assistance to the civilian elements, in particular in relation to transport, medical assistance and engineering.
- Assisting in humanitarian relief operations upon request by the Afghan government. ISAF troops have launched several relief missions distributing medication, food and winter supplies to help villagers cope with severe weather conditions in different parts of the country.
- Providing support to the Afghan government and internationally-sanctioned counter-narcotics efforts through intelligence-sharing and the conduct of an efficient public information campaign, as well as support to the Afghan National Army conducting counter-narcotics operations. ISAF also assists the training of the ANSF in counter-narcotics related activities and provides logistic support, when requested, for the delivery of alternative livelihood programmes.

Following calls from the US to tackle the drugs trade in Afghanistan more proactively in order to undermine the financial base of the Taliban insurgency, at an informal meeting on 9-10 October 2008 NATO Defence Ministers agreed to expand the counter narcotics role of the ISAF mission. This enhanced support by ISAF includes the destruction of processing facilities and action against narcotic producers if there is a clearly established link with the insurgency.<sup>4</sup> Such action can only be undertaken by ISAF forces upon the request of the Afghan Government and with the consent of the national authorities of the forces involved.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Narcotics facilities/facilitators are defined by NATO as all facilities associated with the narcotics industry and those individuals involved in the processing, storing and transporting of illegal narcotics or precursor chemicals that directly support the insurgency (NATO Fact Sheet, June 2009)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_8189.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm)

### 1.3 Command and Control

Since 2003 overall command of the NATO operation has rested with Allied Command Operations at SHAPE in Belgium; while Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Headquarters Brunssum has served as the NATO operational HQ for ISAF. Headquarters ISAF, located in Kabul has served as NATO's theatre level command for the operation, working with the Government of Afghanistan, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, international organisations and non-governmental organisations in implementing their mutual goals in the country. Since February 2007 HQ ISAF had been configured as a composite HQ with staff drawn from existing NATO Standing HQ and contributing ISAF nations, in contrast to the previous situation which saw the rotation of command between existing Corps HQ.<sup>6</sup>

In August 2009 NATO Member States agreed, however, to adjust the ISAF upper command structure to reflect the evolution in ISAF's scope and scale of responsibilities in those last few years, and the increasing need for greater co-operation with the Afghan authorities and other international partners. The decision was subsequently taken to separate the strategic and the day-to-day operational functions of ISAF with the establishment of a second intermediary HQ.

The new ISAF command structure now comprises a higher operational headquarters, ISAF HQ, commanded by a four-star General (COMISAF – currently General John Allen)<sup>7</sup>; and a subordinate three-star headquarters, ISAF Joint Command (IJC) HQ, both located in Kabul:

- **HQ ISAF** – under this new command structure COMISAF focuses on the strategic political-military aspects of the ISAF mission, co-ordinating those ISAF operations with the work of the Afghan government and other international organisations in the country.

COMISAF is dual-hatted as the Commander of ISAF and of US Forces in Afghanistan (COMUSFOR-A) thus ensuring the continued co-ordination of ISAF operations and Operation *Enduring Freedom*. COMISAF has command responsibility over the IJC Commander, the Commander of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan<sup>8</sup> and Special Operations Forces.

- **ISAF Joint Command HQ** – COMIJC is responsible for executing the full spectrum of tactical operations throughout the country, on a day-to-day basis, and has command of the six Regional Commands, the 28 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and other theatre enablers. In addition COMIJC ensures the co-ordination of ISAF and ANSF operations.

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<sup>6</sup> A list of those rotations is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/4854, *The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan*, 9 February 2009

<sup>7</sup> General David Petraeus handed over command of ISAF operations on 18 July 2011. He had replaced General Stanley McChrystal as ISAF Commander and head of US forces in Afghanistan in June 2010 (formally assuming command on 4 July 2010). General McChrystal resigned in June following an article in [Rolling Stone](#) magazine in which he criticised the Obama administration.

<sup>8</sup> In October 2009 NATO announced that it would establish a new NATO headquarters to oversee higher level training and mentoring for the ANSF in order to achieve a more co-ordinated and effective approach to training. Under the new organisational structure, the US-led training and mentoring programme of Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) was integrated with ISAF efforts into a common HQ: NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A). The key elements of NTM-A will include the provision of training and mentoring teams to the ANA and the ANP, the institutional training of the ANA and ANP reform at the district level and below. CSTC-A will continue to mentor the Afghan Ministries of Defence and Interior and will be responsible for developing the Afghan National Air Corps, the logistics command and the Afghan national military hospital.

The US acts as framework nation for the first manning of the ICJ HQ which achieved full operational capability in November 2009.

There will be a balanced representation of US and NATO personnel at both HQ.

In March 2010 the Pentagon announced its intention to integrate nearly all of the remaining 20,000 US troops operating in Afghanistan under Operation *Enduring Freedom* into ISAF, following calls by then USFOR-A/ISAF Commander General McChrystal to further simplify the military command structure in the country. Only small detachments of US Special Forces and a detention unit remain outside of the NATO command structure.<sup>9</sup>

### **Regional Commands**

At the end of May 2010 the North Atlantic Council gave formal approval for the reorganisation of ISAF's Regional Command South into two regional commands: RC South West and RC South in order to allow commanders to focus on geographically smaller areas, ensure greater partnering between ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces and deliver the objective of increased governance, development and security in those regions.

Under IJC HQ there are now six Regional Commands (RC) which incorporate 28 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and several Forward Support Bases (FSB). The RC command all ISAF units in their area of responsibility and coordinate all regional civil-military activities conducted by the military elements of the PRT. Command of each RC is assumed by a lead nation and is composed of a Command and Control (C2) HQ and a Forward Support Base (FSB) which provides a supply, medical and transport hub in each region.

The RC are located, and led, as follows:

- **Regional Command North** – HQ RC (N) and the FSB are located at Mazar-e-Sharif and led by Germany. There are six PRT under RC (N) command led by Sweden, Germany, Hungary, Norway and Turkey.
- **Regional Command Capital** – located in Kabul and is currently led by Turkey. RC Capital is a distinct entity from HQ ISAF.
- **Regional Command West** – located at Herat. Since July 2008 Italy has been the lead nation, assuming command responsibility from Spain. Spain has, however, retained operational responsibility for the FSB. There are four PRT under RC (W) command led by Italy, Spain, the US and Lithuania.
- **Regional Command South** – Located in Kandahar. The UK initially retained command responsibility of RC South after the division of RC south into two commands. The transfer of command responsibility to the United States subsequently took place on 2 November 2010, ending a five-year practice of rotating the command among Britain, Canada and the Netherlands. RC South now has three PRT led by the US and US/Australia, and control of an ISAF force of approximately 35,000 personnel in Kandahar, Daykundi, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces. The UK handed over command of Kandahar airfield to the US in November 2010. Kandahar continues to be the base of 904 Expeditionary Wing, including the UK's Tornado and Hercules contingents; while security for the base remains the responsibility of the RAF Regiment.

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<sup>9</sup> "Most US enduring freedom troops to join NATO's Afghan wing", *Agence France Presse*, 16 March 2010

- **Regional Command South West** – Established in June 2010 and has responsibility for Helmand and Nimroz provinces. The US has assumed command of RC South West in the first instance, which in the longer term had been expected to operate as a rotational command between the US and UK.<sup>10</sup> The UK-led PRT at Lashkar Gah, and therefore the majority of British forces in Afghanistan, now fall within this command. In total RC South West has approximately 32,000 troops.
- **Regional Command East** – located at Bagram and led by the US. There are 14 PRT under RC (E) command led by the US, the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Turkey and South Korea.

On the division of RC South and the subsequent changes in command and control, Major General Gordon Messenger, Strategic Communications Officer to the British Chief of the Defence Staff, commented:

This command and control change makes complete sense and is welcome. The span and complexity of the command challenge in southern Afghanistan has increased enormously in recent months and these changes provide the best command support to the troops on the ground.

The change will also align the ISAF military structure in the south with the structure of the Afghan National Army, enabling a greater partnering capacity between ISAF and Afghan forces.

The UK has been closely involved in the preparations for this change and entirely agrees with its rationale. We are well accustomed to operating within a multinational coalition command structure and we are entirely content that the best interests of the UK force will be maintained under the new arrangements.<sup>11</sup>

## 2 NATO's Lisbon Summit – November 2010

At a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers at the end of April 2010 agreement on a common roadmap for progressive security transition to the Afghan authorities, beginning in late 2010, was reached. However, in reaching a draft agreement the NATO Secretary General cautioned:

We need to be clear about what transition means and doesn't mean. Transition means that Afghan authorities take the lead, and we move into a supportive role. But it doesn't mean a rush for the exit.<sup>12</sup>

Few details of that draft plan were released with the expectation that a roadmap would be developed in conjunction with the Afghan government for endorsement at the security conference in Kabul on 20 July 2010. Indeed, the Communiqué agreed at the Kabul Conference reiterated the support of the international community to the objective “that the Afghan National Security Forces should lead and conduct military operations in all provinces by the end of 2014”. The plan for transition agreed at that July conference set out the following principles:

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<sup>10</sup> HC Deb 26 May 2010, c4WS

<sup>11</sup> MOD Press Release, 21 May 2010

<sup>12</sup> NATO press release, 23 April 2010

- Transition would be a conditions-based process and any recommendations would be based on conditions on the ground.
- Transition would not signify a withdrawal of ISAF forces but a gradual shift to a supporting role as the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces developed. As circumstances dictate, the international community's civilian and military representatives would gradually shift toward a supporting, then mentoring, then enabling and finally a sustaining role across all three pillars of security, governance and development.
- Transition would involve key Afghan institutions and functions as well as geographic areas, and would include the evolution of the ISAF Provincial Reconstructions Teams (PRTs) towards a mainstream developmental model. ISAF Headquarters would remain even as forces drawdown.

The criteria for transition were defined thus:

Successful transition of security responsibility requires that Afghan National Security Forces, under effective Afghan civilian control, will be capable of tackling existing and new security challenges, with continued support from ISAF. Transition assessments will also consider the ability and authority of the Afghan government to provide the rule of law and manage public administration at sub-national and local levels; and the capacity of an area to sustain socio-economic development. Transition must be irreversible.<sup>13</sup>

Assessment of each province's readiness for transition was to be undertaken by the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board, with its recommendations to be submitted to the Afghan Cabinet for approval. Any provinces identified as falling short of transition criteria would be the focus of an Action Plan specifically geared towards addressing those shortfalls.

The Kabul Communiqué went on to conclude that “the Government of Afghanistan and NATO/ISAF are to assess jointly the provinces with the aim of announcing by the end of 2010 that the process of transition is underway”.<sup>14</sup> At the time the intention was to launch that process in time for the Lisbon summit.

However, General Petraeus, less than two months into his new role as Commander of ISAF, suggested in an interview with the *New York Times* in August 2010 that he would resist any large scale or rapid withdrawal of US forces in mid-2011 and that should the conditions of the ground warrant it, he would not discount the possibility of recommending a delay in drawing down forces.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.1 Transition of Security Responsibilities

The Lisbon Summit Declaration subsequently identified the ISAF mission in Afghanistan as “the Alliance’s key priority” and confirmed that a new phase in the Afghan mission would now begin, with the process of transition to Afghan security responsibility starting in early 2011 in certain districts and provinces “following a joint Afghan and NATO/ISAF assessment and decision”. Transition would be conditions-based, “not calendar-driven” and “will not equate to withdrawal of ISAF troops” which will remain in a supporting role, but would result in Afghan forces gradually assuming full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan by

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<sup>13</sup> NATO Factsheet, [NATO's role in Afghanistan](#)

<sup>14</sup> *Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan Communiqué*, 20 July 2010

<sup>15</sup> “Petraeus opposes a rapid pullout in Afghanistan”, *the New York Times*, 15 August 2010



the end of 2014. The declaration did not, however, pinpoint which districts and provinces would be the first to transition.

More specifically, the Declaration by the nations contributing to ISAF set out the following:

- The agreed process of transition will be jointly carried out.
- Assistance with Afghan national priority programmes will be better aligned.
- As transition proceeds, ISAF's profile and reconfiguration will be adjusted, with military assets reinvested, as necessary and appropriate, to meet critical security, training and mentoring requirements.
- Afghan security capabilities will be further strengthened as ISAF gradually moves away from combat to an increasingly supporting role.
- The international civilian effort, including the work conducted through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams will continue to evolve and enable greater Afghan capacity and leadership, while also preparing for longer-term development assistance.

That document also reiterated the importance of the Afghan security forces training mission to the process of transition, and emphasised the challenge of meeting the requirements for "trainers, mentors and critical enablers for 2011 and beyond". It went on to welcome measures for reconciliation and reintegration, recognising them as "a key part of achieving lasting stability in Afghanistan" and expressed continued support for Afghan-led efforts through the Peace Jirga, the High Peace Council and the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program. The declaration did, however, state that "corruption remains a central challenge to be addressed" and called on the Afghan government to fully implement the Kabul commitments on improving governance, strengthening the rule of law and ensuring sustainable economic growth. Co-operation with regional partners was also welcomed.

## **2.2 Declaration on Enduring Partnership**

NATO leaders and the Afghan government also agreed a *Declaration on an Enduring Partnership* which seeks to establish long term partnership arrangements between NATO and the Afghan government beyond the scope of the current ISAF mission, and in line with broader UN-led international efforts. Centred round the Comprehensive Approach, that declaration commits to developing effective measures of co-operation that will provide sustained practical support to Afghan security institutions in the longer term. Specifically, those measures could include:

- Mechanisms for political and military dialogue.
- Continuing use of NATO trust funds in support of capacity building of Afghan government security institutions.
- A continuing NATO liaison in Afghanistan to assist in the implementation of the declaration with a common understanding that NATO has no ambition to establish a permanent military presence in Afghanistan or to use its presence in Afghanistan against other nations.

- Continuation of the NATO Afghan training mission, reconfigured as necessary, and with the approval of NATO leaders, to meet the Afghan government's evolving security needs.
- An individual programme of additional co-operation activities derived from, and incorporating, the existing Afghan Co-operation Programme along with other initiatives. Such activities could include assistance with the development and reform of security ministries and other national institutions; helping build professionalism and capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces in areas such as counter terrorism and counter narcotics; and providing tailored access to NATO courses, institutions and military and civilian expertise.

NATO and the Afghan government are now expected to consult over the scope of such a partnership agreement with any resulting co-operation programme approved by NATO and the Afghan government on a regular basis through a jointly-owned process. The declaration specifically commits all parties to review the declaration and the programme of co-operation resulting from it, at a senior political level and at intervals of no more than three years. It also confirms that discussions between the Afghan government and NATO on a Status of Forces Agreement will be initiated within the next three years. In the meantime, the application of the current Military Technical Agreement will continue to be monitored and reviewed by the Joint Coordinating Body. With the joint approval of NATO and the Afghan government, third parties may contribute to the activities resulting from this declaration, although any bilateral assistance between the Afghan government and such nations will remain outside of its purview.

### **3 Timetable for Security Transition**

Discussing the process of transition in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2011, General Petraeus commented:

The shifting of responsibility from ISAF to Afghan forces will be conducted at a pace determined by conditions on the ground, with assessments provided from the bottom up so that those at operational command level in Afghanistan can plan the resulting battlefield geometry adjustments with our Afghan partners.

According to the NATO principles, transition will see our forces thinning out, not just handing off, with reinvestment of some of the forces freed up by transition in contiguous areas, or in training missions where more work is needed. Similar processes are also taking place as we commence transition of certain training and institutional functions from ISAF trainers to their Afghan counterparts.

As we embark on the process of transition, we should keep in mind the imperative of ensuring that the transition actions we take will be irreversible. As the ambassadors of several ISAF countries emphasized at one recent NATO meeting, we'll get one shot at transition, and we need to get it right.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, [Hearing to receive testimony on the situation in Afghanistan](#), 15 March 2011

The NATO Secretary General also sought to reiterate that “transition does not mean a rush for the exit. On the contrary – our forces will stay to support, to mentor the Afghans, and to train more new recruits”.<sup>17</sup>

### **3.1 Phase One**

On 22 March 2011 Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced the first phase of transition of security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces.

That first phase would involve the gradual handover of seven districts and provinces:

- Bamyan province
- Kabul province, with the exception of Surobi district
- Panjshir province
- Herat City (capital of Herat province)
- Lashkar Gah (capital of Helmand province)
- Mazar-e-Sharif (capital of Balkh province)
- Mehtar Lam (capital of Laghman province).

See section 4 for a map of the provinces.

The announcement that Mazar-e-Sharif would be among the first districts to transition was overshadowed, however, by an attack on the UN compound in the city on 1 April 2011 which killed seven UN workers.

The gradual shift in security responsibility began in May 2011 with ISAF operations moving towards a more supporting and advisory role in each of these areas, with Afghan National Security Forces assuming the lead in decision making, planning and conduct of security operations. The formal handover of security responsibility in each of these areas was subsequently achieved in mid July. Bamyan province was the first area to be formally handed over on 17 July. British forces handed over Lashkar Gah on 20 July, while Panjshir province was the final area to be formally handed over in phase one of the security transition on 24 July.

### **3.2 Phase Two**

The districts and provinces that will be formally handed over in the second phase of security transition were announced by President Karzai on 27 November 2011.

Those districts and provinces are as follows:

- The provinces of Balkh, Daykundi, Takhar, Samangan, Nimroz and the remainder of Kabul province.
- The cities of Jalalabad, ChaghCharan (Ghor province), Sheberghan (Jawzjan province), Feyzabad (Badakhshan province), Ghazni (Ghazni province), Maidan Shahr (Wardak province) and Qala-e Now (Badghis province).

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<sup>17</sup> NATO press release, 11 March 2011

- The districts of:
  - Yaftal Safli, Arghanj, Baharak, Tashkan, Keshem and Argu in Badakhshan province
  - Abkamari in Badghis province
  - Nawah and Nad-e Ali in Helmand province
  - All districts of Herat province except for Shindand district, Obi and Chisht Sharif
  - Qarghai in Laghman province
  - Behsud, Quskunar and Sorkhrud districts of Nangarhar province
  - All districts of Parwan province except for Shiwari and Siahgherd
  - All districts of Sar-E Pul province except for Sayyad
  - Districts of first part of Beh Sud, Jelriz and Centre of Behsud in Wardak province.

As part of this second phase, Afghan security forces will progressively take over lead responsibility for security in each of these areas over the next few months. NATO has stated that implementation of transition in these areas could take up to 24 months to complete.<sup>18</sup>

Following this phase of transition, Afghan Security Forces will be responsible for the security of 50% of the Afghan population.<sup>19</sup>

The objective remains that all of Afghanistan will have begun the process of transition by the end of 2013 and by the end of 2014 the Afghan National Security Forces will lead and conduct security operations across the whole of Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup>

British forces are currently operating in Nad-e Ali in Helmand province. In anticipation of the inclusion of Nad-e Ali in the second phase of transition, Afghan security forces have increasingly been leading security operations in the area, with British forces in support. According to the MOD this joint effort has led to an 86% drop in violent incidents across the district in 2011 compared with the previous year.<sup>21</sup> In July 2011 British forces also handed over responsibility for a number of checkpoints in the Nad-e Ali district to Afghan National Security Forces.

#### **4 Multinational Forces in ISAF**

As of 18 October 2011 there were approximately 130,638 military personnel deployed as part of ISAF, from 49 contributing nations.<sup>22</sup> Those military personnel are divided among the six

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<sup>18</sup> [NATO press release](#), 28 November 2011

<sup>19</sup> [ISAF press release](#), 27 November 2011

<sup>20</sup> [MOD press release](#), 28 November 2011

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*

<sup>22</sup> El Salvador became the 49<sup>th</sup> contributing country in August 2011

ISAF Regional Commands and thus have security responsibility for specific geographical areas.<sup>23</sup> Those force locations, according to PRT, are as follows:



The broad contribution of each nation is currently as follows:

Albania	286	Germany	5000	Poland	2580
Armenia	126	Greece	153	Portugal	140
Australia	1550	Hungary	415	Romania	1873
Austria	3	Iceland	4	Singapore	39
Azerbaijan	94	Ireland	7	Slovakia	309
Belgium	520	Italy	3952	Slovenia	77
Bosnia & Herzegovina	55	Jordan	0	Spain	1526
Bulgaria	597	Republic of Korea	350	Sweden	500
Canada*	529	Latvia	174	The Former Yugoslav Republic of	163

<sup>23</sup> Information on ISAF troop contributions since January 2007 is available from the [ISAF website](#).

				Macedonia	
Croatia	317	Lithuania	236	Tonga	55
Czech Republic	623	Luxembourg	11	Turkey	1840
Denmark	750	Malaysia	46	Ukraine	23
El Salvador	24	Mongolia	114	United Arab Emirates	35
Estonia	159	Montenegro	39	United Kingdom	9500
Finland	156	Netherlands	183	United States	90000
France	3932	New Zealand	188		
Georgia	937	Norway	429		
				Total	130,638

Source: ISAF Headquarters, 18 October 2011

\* Canadian forces are deployed purely to train Afghan Security Forces.

At present over half of the countries contributing to ISAF operate with national caveats that restrict or prohibit certain actions (such as counter narcotics operations for example) or operations in specific geographical locations, without national consent. Nearly 40% of caveats are in the latter category, which are regarded as presenting a “significant challenge for COMISAF as they limit his agility”. The Pentagon’s November 2010 report suggested that “The effect of geographical caveats on transition may present further challenges, as thinned-out ISAF Forces may be more difficult to redeploy in unstable, insecure areas where handoff of security responsibilities to ANSF may require ad-hoc ISAF engagement”.<sup>24</sup> Currently 20 troop contributing nations are “caveat free”.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.1 British Forces

Since November 2009 the UK contingent in Afghanistan has consistently totalled approximately 10,000 personnel: 9,500 of which are deployed as part of ISAF and the remainder are UK Special Forces.<sup>26</sup> The UK is the second largest contributor, accounting for approximately 7.3% of total ISAF forces deployed.

Since 2006 British forces have been predominantly deployed in the southern province of Helmand and at Kandahar airfield. Following the surge of US forces into the southern provinces during the end of 2009/first half of 2010, and the reorganisation of Regional Command South (see above), British forces handed over a number of key areas of territory and the command and control of RC South, to US forces, in order to allow British forces to consolidate their presence in central and southern Helmand. In April 2010 US forces assumed responsibility for the town of Musa Qala. In June 2010 British forces handed over

<sup>24</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan*, November 2010

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

<sup>26</sup> HC Deb 30 November 2009, c836

responsibility for Kajaki; while responsibility for Sangin was transferred to the US in September.<sup>27</sup> Responding to suggestions that the US marines were “bailing out” British forces in Sangin the Deputy Commander of US forces in Afghanistan, Lieutenant-General David Rodriguez, argued that the redeployment was a tactical move that would “concentrate British forces where we need them most – in the central areas of the province”.<sup>28</sup> In September 2010 Major General Gordon Messenger, Chief of the Defence Staff’s Strategic Communications Officer, commented:

The transfer of responsibility for Sangin to the USMC is the latest in a series of practical and sensible reconfigurations that have occurred as a result of the significant uplift in ISAF troops in Helmand over the last year.

It allows British forces, with their Danish and Estonian allies, to focus their efforts in the critical central Helmand area, building on the strong momentum that has already been achieved there.<sup>29</sup>

Following the transfer of security responsibility for Kajaki, Musa Qaleh and Sangin to the US in the summer of 2010, the UK subsequently announced in October that the number of British personnel dedicated to training the ANSF would be increased by more than 320, with more than 60 UK troops redeployed to the Helmand Police Training Centre in Lashkar Gah.<sup>30</sup> This rebalancing of forces did not increase the UK’s overall force level in Afghanistan from 9,500.

Despite speculation that British forces could re-deploy out of Helmand province as a result of both the US surge and the withdrawal of other Coalition forces from Kandahar province, at the end of May 2010 the MOD stated that “UK forces are committed to their enduring deployment to central Helmand and there are no plans to deploy UK forces from Helmand to anywhere else”.<sup>31</sup> Then Secretary of State for Defence, Liam Fox, reiterated this position on several occasions suggesting that the move of British forces from Helmand to Kandahar was “very unlikely”.<sup>32</sup> In December 2010 the MOD did confirm, however, that a company from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Royal Welsh would extend its activity into Kandahar Province as part of measures to secure freedom of movement along Highway One between central Helmand and Kandahar, for a period of up to six months.<sup>33</sup>

In August 2011 the MOD announced that British forces would re-deploy to the Upper Gereshk Valley following the withdrawal of US Marines from that area. According to the MOD “the presence of US Marines was only ever a temporary measure while British personnel were refocused on a short-term task elsewhere”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Details of the timeframe for the reorganisation of forces in RC South West, including the handover of Sangin, were set out by the MOD on 7 July 2010.

<sup>28</sup> “US general denies his marines are bailing out British forces”, *The Times*, 8 July 2010

<sup>29</sup> MOD Press Release, 20 September 2010

<sup>30</sup> MOD Press Release, 14 October 2010

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> “MOD denies Britain had eyes shut over Helmand”, *BBC News Online*, 9 June 2010

<sup>33</sup> See:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/RoyalWelshCompanyExtendsActivityIntoKandaharProvince.htm>

<sup>34</sup> MOD, *Defence in the Media*, 10 October 2011

### ***Current Deployed Forces – Operation Herrick 15***

20 Armoured Brigade assumed command responsibility for British troops in Afghanistan (Operation *Herrick 15*) on 9 October 2011. Service personnel are also deployed in support of ISAF HQ in Kabul.

The British contingent in Afghanistan therefore currently comprises the following Army, RAF, Royal Navy and Royal Marines units which will be deployed until April 2012:

- 20 Armoured Brigade Headquarters and Signal Squadron (200)
- Elements of 19<sup>th</sup> Light Brigade JQ and Signal Squadron (209)
- Headquarters 101 Logistic Brigade
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Queen's Dragoon Guards
- The Queen's Royal Hussars (The Queen's Own and Royal Irish)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (Black Watch)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (Queen's and Royal Hampshires)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Battalions The Rifles
- 35 Engineer Regiment
- 1 Medical Regiment
- 3 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
- 110 Provost Company, Royal Military Police
- Elements of:
  - 5<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 39<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Regiments, Royal Artillery
  - 25, 38, and 71 (volunteer) Engineer Regiments
  - 12 (Air Support) Engineer Group
  - 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group
  - 1<sup>st</sup> (UK) Armoured Division HQ and Signal Regiment
  - 10<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Signal Regiments
  - 14<sup>th</sup> Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare)
  - 21<sup>st</sup> Signal Regiment (Air Support)
  - 1, 3, 4 and 9 Regiments, Army Air Corps



- Joint Helicopter Support Squadron
- Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Support Battalion
- 1 Logistic Support Regiment, Royal Logistics Corps
- 6, 7, 8, 9 and 29 Regiments, Royal Logistic Corps
- 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, Royal Logistics Corp
- 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistics Corp
- 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps
- 201 and 208 Field Hospital (Volunteers)
- 19 Light Brigade Combat Service Support Battalion
- 101 and 104 Force Support Battalions, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
- 173 Provost Company, Royal Military Police
- Special Investigations Branch United Kingdom
- 1 Military Working Dogs Regiment
- 15 Psychological Operations Group
- 156 Transport Regiment (Volunteers), Royal Logistic Corps
- 159 Supply Regiment (Volunteers), Royal Logistics Corps
- 88 Postal and Courier Regiment (Volunteers), Royal Logistic Corps
- 162 Postal Courier and Movement Regiment (Volunteers), Royal Logistic Corps
- 166 Supply Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (Volunteers)
- 148 Expeditionary Force Institute Squadron (Volunteers), The Royal Logistics Corp
- 602, 603, 606 and 618 Tactical Air Control Party
- 3 Force Protection Wing Headquarters, Royal Air Force
- 11 Squadron, Royal Air Force Regiment
- 31 Squadron, Royal Air Force
- IX (B) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- 2 (Army Co-operation) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- Elements of:
  - 845, 846, and 857 Naval Air Squadrons

- 2 and 3 Royal Air Force Police Wing
- 18, 24, 27, 28, 30, 39, 78 and 101 Squadrons, Royal Air Force
- 5 (Army Co-operation) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- 1 Air Mobility Wing, Royal Air Force
- 1 Air Control Centre, Royal Air Force
- 90 Signals Unit, Royal Air Force
- 2 (Mechanical Transport) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- 5001 Squadron, Royal Air Force
- 3 Mobile Catering Squadron, Royal Air Force
- Tactical Supply Wing, Royal Air Force
- Tactical Medical Wing, Royal Air Force
- 1 (Expeditionary Logistics) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- 93 (Expeditionary Armaments) Squadron, Royal Air Force
- Tactical Imagery-Intelligence Wing, Royal Air Force
- 5131 (BD) Squadron

As outlined below, in May 2011 the Prime Minister announced that the UK will withdraw 426 personnel by February 2012. Those personnel comprise ARRC personnel augmenting the ISAF Joint Command Staff, RAF regiment personnel from the Kandahar airfield force protection task and personnel who assisted in the transfer of the UK strategic air hub from Kandahar to Camp Bastion. That withdrawal will not therefore affect the UK's enduring commitment of 9,500 personnel.

In July 2011, however, the Prime Minister went on to confirm that enduring force levels would be reduced by 500 personnel, from 9,500 to 9,000 by the end of 2012.<sup>35</sup>

## **5 Timetable for Withdrawal**

The agreement reached at the NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010 provided a provisional timetable for withdrawal which the contributing nations of ISAF have expressed their support for. However, a number of individual countries have also set down more specific timetables for the drawdown of forces, within that framework for transition.

### **5.1 US Forces**

The December 2010 review of strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan stated:

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<sup>35</sup> HC Deb 6 July 2011, c1512

As a result of our integrated efforts in 2010, we are setting the conditions to begin transition to Afghan security lead in early 2011 and to begin a responsible, conditions-based U.S. troop reduction in July 2011.<sup>36</sup>

That position was reiterated by General Petraeus during evidence to the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2011. However, he also noted that “while the security progress achieved over the past year is significant, it is also fragile and reversible”.<sup>37</sup> Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has also previously suggested that while the US is “very committed to beginning the drawdown then” it will be based on conditions and the recommendations of commanders on the ground, and that as a result “there will continue to be a large number of US and allied troops on the ground in Afghanistan after July 2011”.<sup>38</sup>

However, differences of opinion between Congress, the US administration and the Pentagon over the size of the reduction in July were widely reported. Military planners reiterated the need for keeping combat troop withdrawals to a minimum in order to avoid losing the security gains that have been made since 2010; while the Administration favoured a “meaningful drawdown” before US Presidential elections in November 2012.<sup>39</sup> Following the death of Osama Bin Laden, which many have viewed as a natural turning point in the war on terror, dozens of US Senators also called for sizeable reductions in Afghanistan in both combat troops as well as logistical and support forces.

President Obama set out his plans for withdrawal in an address to the nation on 22 June 2011. In that speech he confirmed that the drawdown of US forces in Afghanistan would begin in July. 10,000 troops will be withdrawn by the end of 2011, with a further 23,000 withdrawn by summer 2012, representing the total surge of 33,000 personnel that deployed in early 2010.

He went on to confirm that:

After this initial reduction, our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security.<sup>40</sup>

He also confirmed that the US would host a NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012 during which alliance partners would “shape the next phase of this transition”.

The US announcement met with a mixture of approval and concern. The NATO Secretary General welcomed the announcement, suggesting that the “tide is turning” and that it was “a natural result of the progress we have made”;<sup>41</sup> while Afghan President Hamid Karzai called it “the right decision for the interest of both countries”.<sup>42</sup> Senator John McCain stated, however: “I am concerned that the withdrawal plan that President Obama announced tonight poses an unnecessary risk to the hard-won gains that our troops have made thus far in Afghanistan and to the decisive progress that must still be made”.<sup>43</sup> A number of military

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<sup>36</sup> White House, *Overview of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Annual Review*, 16 December 2010

<sup>37</sup> Senate Armed Services Committee, *Hearing to receive testimony on the situation in Afghanistan*, 15 March 2011

<sup>38</sup> [US Department of Defense Press Release](#), 28 November 2010

<sup>39</sup> “Obama and military battling over troop withdrawal”, *The Times*, 1 April 2011

<sup>40</sup> White House, *Remarks by the President on the Way Forward in Afghanistan*, 22 June 2011

<sup>41</sup> NATO press release, 23 June 2011

<sup>42</sup> “Trust Afghanistan’s forces to secure country’s future, says Hamid Karzai”, *The Guardian*, 23 June 2011

<sup>43</sup> “The tide changes for Obama on Afghanistan”, *BBC News*, 23 June 2011

commentators also argued that the withdrawal of 20,000 personnel during the peak of the summer fighting season would make it “difficult, if not impossible, for commanders to carry out one of their major goals for next year” which would involve US troops freed up in the southern provinces as security gains are consolidated and transition progresses, to focus their efforts on the vulnerable eastern border with Pakistan. Michael O’Hanlon at the Brookings Institution called the decision “a rushed ending to what has been a fairly effective surge”.<sup>44</sup>

## 5.2 British Forces

In his first Statement to the House on Afghanistan on 14 June 2010, the new Prime Minister, David Cameron, highlighted the Government’s commitment to the objectives of the Afghanistan campaign and sought to reiterate its importance to the UK. He stated:

Let me address the first question that people are asking. Why are we in Afghanistan? I can answer in two words: national security. Our forces are in Afghanistan to prevent Afghan territory from again being used by al-Qaeda as a base from which to plan attacks on the UK or on our allies.

Of course, the al-Qaeda training camps and the Taliban regime that protected them were removed from Afghanistan in the months after 9/11, and the presence of NATO forces prevents them from returning, but Afghanistan is not yet strong enough to look after its own security. That is why we are there [...]

Today I am advised that the threat from al-Qaeda from Afghanistan and Pakistan has reduced, but I am also advised that if it were not for the current presence of UK and international coalition forces, al-Qaeda would return to Afghanistan and the threat to the UK would rise.<sup>45</sup>

He went on to comment:

The next question is how long we must stay. The Afghan people do not want foreign forces on their soil any longer than necessary, and the British people are rightly impatient for progress. Our forces will not remain in Afghanistan a day longer than is necessary, and I want to bring them home the moment it is safe to do so [...]

That is why we back the strategy developed by General McChrystal, commander of the international security assistance forces, and endorsed by President Obama and NATO. That strategy involves protecting the civilian population from the insurgents, supporting more effective government at every level, and building up the Afghan national security forces as rapidly as is feasible. We want to transfer security responsibility for districts and provinces to Afghan control as soon as they are ready, but that must be done on the basis of facts on the ground, not a pre-announced timetable.<sup>46</sup>

Reports of a rift between Cabinet colleagues over the timetable for withdrawal of British troops in Afghanistan surfaced, however, after Foreign Secretary William Hague stated at the beginning of July 2010 that he would be “very surprised” if Afghan security forces did not have responsibility for their own security by 2014 and that he did not expect UK combat forces to be there in 2015.<sup>47</sup> Separately Prime Minister David Cameron had called for troops

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<sup>44</sup> “2012 troop pullback worries military experts”, *The New York Times*, 22 June 2011

<sup>45</sup> HC Deb 14 June 2010, c603

<sup>46</sup> HC Deb 14 June 2010, c604

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=22462763>

to be out by 2015; while Defence Secretary Liam Fox suggested that British forces would be the last to leave Afghanistan and that strategic patience was required.<sup>48</sup>

Speaking at the end of the NATO Summit in November 2010, the Prime Minister stated that the withdrawal of British **combat** troops from Afghanistan by 2015 was a firm deadline that would be met:

The commitment we have entered into today to transfer the lead responsibility for security to the Afghan Government by the end of 2014 will pave the way for British combat troops to be out of Afghanistan by 2015. This is a firm deadline that we will meet.<sup>49</sup>

He went on to stress, however, that the NATO summit had also agreed to provide long-term support to Afghanistan on training, diplomacy and development and that “we will stand by Afghanistan for many years to come”.<sup>50</sup> In late November 2010, the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Richards, was reported as suggesting that there was “increasing scope for redistribution of manpower, certainly scope for reduction” of the number of British forces deployed in Afghanistan by 2012. However, he sought to reiterate that any drawdown will be subject to conditions on the ground.<sup>51</sup>

Giving evidence to the Liaison Committee in May 2011, the Prime Minister confirmed that approximately 400 troops would withdraw from Afghanistan by February 2012. However, those forces are additional personnel deployed for specific planned tasks and the Prime Minister confirmed that the UK’s enduring force level in Afghanistan remains at 9,500:

Our enduring force level remains at 9,500, but as you know, our force level has been above that if you include special forces and some of the extra operations we’ve undertaken.

If you look at what is happening with the troops that went in to guard the airport at Kandahar, and also some people involved in the air bridge, and some people involved in the rapid reaction force, there will be around 400, perhaps slightly more, troops coming out of Afghanistan in the coming year, up to February 2012, but the enduring force level remains at 9,500. I am sure that the Americans completely understand that. It is rather less than the reductions they are planning, and, as I say, we remain in the toughest part of the country, doing one of the most difficult jobs. When you go there, one of the first things the Americans say to you is how much they appreciate the incredible work our troops are doing.<sup>52</sup>

In light of the US announcement to withdraw its surge forces by the end of summer 2012, there had been considerable speculation that the UK would follow suit and announce plans to begin withdrawing British forces within the same timeframe. In response to the US announcement, however, the Prime Minister reiterated:

We will keep UK force levels in Afghanistan under constant review. I have already said there will be no UK troops in combat roles in Afghanistan by 2015 and, where conditions on the ground allow, it is right that we bring troops home sooner.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> “UK set to be among last out of Afghanistan says Fox”, *BBC News Online*, 30 June 2010

<sup>49</sup> [MOD Press Release](#), 22 November 2010

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*

<sup>51</sup> “Afghan withdrawal will start in just over a year, says top general”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 2010

<sup>52</sup> Liaison Committee, Evidence from the Prime Minister, 17 May 2011, Q66

<sup>53</sup> MOD press release, 23 June 2011

In a statement to the House on 6 July 2011, the Prime Minister confirmed that 500 personnel would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2012, taking the UK's enduring commitment to 9,000 personnel.<sup>54</sup>

### 5.3 Other Coalition Forces

- **Canada** – Since 2009 the Canadian Government repeatedly made clear its intention to withdraw Canadian forces from Afghanistan once the parliamentary mandate for the combat operation ended in 2011. However, domestic political support for retaining a Canadian non-combat presence in Afghanistan beyond 2011 had been steadily increasing after a Canadian Senate report warned at the end of June 2010 that Canada's standing among its allies could suffer if it was to withdraw the entirety of its forces in 2011.

In November 2010 the Canadian Government subsequently announced that its contingent of combat forces would withdraw once its parliamentary mandate expired at the end of July 2011. However, it also stressed its continuing commitment to Afghanistan and therefore outlined the intention to deploy a non-combat force of approximately 950 personnel to the country until March 2014 as part of the NATO Training Mission. Those forces will focus on training the ANSF as part of Canada's wider engagement agenda which will concentrate on four key areas: the education and health of young people; advancing security, the rule of law and human rights; regional diplomacy and humanitarian assistance.<sup>55</sup> The decision to deploy a non-combat force for a further three years was taken without parliamentary approval, a move that has been criticised by some members of the Canadian House of Commons. The government argued that a vote on the deployment was unnecessary as it only involved non-combat troops. Indeed, in January 2010 Canadian military personnel were deployed to Haiti in a non-combat role without a parliamentary vote.

Canadian forces handed over control of their areas of responsibility in southern Afghanistan to US forces at the beginning of July 2011.

- **Australia** – In October 2009 the Australian Defence Minister, John Faulkner, stated that the government was examining how best to complete Australia's mission in Uruzgan province in "the shortest timeframe possible" and that discussion about possible exit strategies had been underway since early 2009.<sup>56</sup> Although 2012 had been touted as a possible date for handing over control of the province to Afghan National Security Forces, the Commander of Australian forces in the Middle East, General Hindmarsh, suggested, however that this date may be too ambitious.<sup>57</sup> The new Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, confirmed at the end of June 2010 that "my approach to Afghanistan will continue the approach taken to date by the Australian government".<sup>58</sup>
- **New Zealand** – On 1 February 2011 the New Zealand government announced that while it would extend the deployment of Special Forces troops to Afghanistan for a further year from April 2011, the size of that contingent would be reduced from 70 to

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<sup>54</sup> HC Deb 6 July 2011, c1512

<sup>55</sup> Further information on each of these four areas is available at: <http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/2011-2014.aspx?lang=en>

<sup>56</sup> "Australia seeks early pull out from Afghanistan", *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 October 2009

<sup>57</sup> "Aim to withdraw diggers from Afghanistan by 2012", *The Age*, 12 January 2009

<sup>58</sup> "Australia: troops to stay in Afghanistan", *The Jerusalem Post*, 25 June 2010

35 personnel. The Prime Minister also suggested that this deployment of Special Forces personnel was likely to be the last. On 19 April 2011 the government announced that they would maintain their 140-strong PRT in Bamyan province until 2014.

- **Netherlands** - The Dutch contingent formally ended its mission in Uruzgan province in southern Afghanistan on 1 August 2010, in line with the end of its Parliamentary mandate which was initially agreed in December 2007. The command of Task Force Uruzgan (which had comprised 1,600 Dutch forces) was subsequently handed over to US and Australian forces. On 29 January 2011, however, the Dutch parliament approved a cabinet proposal to deploy a new training mission to Afghanistan that would comprise 545 non-combat personnel, including police trainers. Those personnel are based in the northern province of Kunduz alongside German troops and will deploy from May 2011 until 2014. However, in order to gain parliamentary approval various concessions were made to Dutch opposition parties. Significantly the Dutch Government agreed to seek a written agreement from the Afghan government that police trained by Dutch troops will not be used in any military action and that any use of four Dutch fighter jets accompanying the mission will be determined by the Netherlands and not the US.<sup>59</sup>
- **Denmark** – At the beginning of March 2011 the Danish Government and opposition parties agreed on a two-year plan for Denmark’s military contingent in Afghanistan. The ‘Helmand Plan 2011’ envisages handing over control of forward operating bases to the Afghan National Army in mid-2011 and reducing its troop levels in the country from 750 to 650 personnel by 2012 (an initial 30 personnel were withdrawn in August 2011). While elements of the current Danish Battle Group are expected to be maintained until the end of 2014, the remaining Danish contingent is expected to have an increased focus on training and education. The plan also sets out a commitment to a continued presence of trainers and enablers after 2014.<sup>60</sup>
- **Germany** – In November 2009 German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, acknowledged that the government was seeking a framework for the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan “to become visible” within the lifetime of the current Bundestag which is due to end in 2013.<sup>61</sup> On 28 January 2011 the Bundestag voted to approve the extension of the current mandate for Afghanistan for a further year, although for the first time that extension included a measure for German troops to begin withdrawing from Afghanistan by the end of 2011, subject to conditions on the ground, and to be completed in 2014. The vote passed by 420 votes to 116, with 43 abstentions.
- **Italy** – In October 2010 the Italian Government suggested that a gradual drawdown of its troops in Afghanistan would begin in summer 2011, with a view to a complete withdrawal by 2014.<sup>62</sup>
- **France** – In October 2010 the French Defence Minister, Hervé Morin, stated that French troops would be aiming to hand over the Surobi district, east of Kabul, to

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<sup>59</sup> See “First victory for Dutch minority government as MPs approve new Afghan mission”, *IHS Global Insight Daily Analysis*, January 2011

<sup>60</sup> “Danish Government agrees troop plan for Afghanistan”, *MOD press release*, 23 February 2011

<sup>61</sup> “Germany eyes Afghan exit road map by 2013”, *Reuters News*, 18 November 2009

<sup>62</sup> “Italy to withdraw troops from Afghanistan”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 October 2010

Afghan forces in 2011, which could lead to the first withdrawal of forces. The statement attracted criticism from NATO which, at that point, had refused to be drawn on which districts and regions could transition first in order to prevent these areas becoming targets for insurgents. Indeed, the first phase of transition announced in March 2011 specifically excluded the handover of control of Surobi district, despite the remainder of Kabul province being highlighted as one of the first areas to transition (see section 3 above). Surobi district will now transition as part of phase two plans.

Following the US announcement of troop withdrawals on 22 June the French government subsequently set out its intention to withdraw its contingent of 4,000 personnel over a similar timeframe to the withdrawal of US surge forces, i.e. by end of summer 2012. A statement issued by the office of President Sarkozy stated: "Given the progress made, [France] will progressively begin withdrawing reinforcements sent to Afghanistan, proportionately and within a timeframe similar to the withdrawal of the American reinforcements. This withdrawal will take place in consultation with our allies and the Afghan authorities".<sup>63</sup>

However, in July 2011 the French President suggested that only a quarter of French forces would be withdrawn by the end of 2012 and that remaining French forces would be based in Kapisa province. The first 200 French personnel were withdrawn in October 2011, reducing the French contingent in Afghanistan to approximately 3,800.

- **Poland** – President Bronislaw Komorowski announced in November 2010 that Poland would end its patrol and combat operations in Afghanistan in 2012, after which point troops will take on a purely training mission until 2014.<sup>64</sup> That drawdown of combat troops began with a planned rotation of forces in October 2011. However, the majority of combat troops are expected to withdraw in early 2012 when forces are next rotated with the emphasis shifting from stabilisation to training.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> French Embassy in the UK, [Statement on French Presence in Afghanistan](#), 23 June 2011

<sup>64</sup> "Germany joins allies in planning to quit Afghanistan", *International Herald Tribune*, 17 December 2010

<sup>65</sup> "Poland to start Afghan troop drawdown in October", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 22 June 2011