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## **U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan: Issues for Congress**

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# U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan: Issues for Congress

## Summary

The U.S. military has been involved in Afghanistan since the fall of 2001 when Operation Enduring Freedom toppled the Taliban regime and attacked the Al Qaeda terrorist network hosted in Afghanistan by the Taliban. A significant U.S. military presence in the country could continue for many years as U.S., North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Coalition, and Afghan National Army (ANA) forces attempt to stabilize the country by defeating the insurgency, facilitating reconstruction, and combating Afghanistan's illegal drug trade. As NATO force levels in Afghanistan increase, the United States expects to reduce its troop presence by approximately 2,500 service members by the end of 2006. NATO is expected to take command of forces in southern Afghanistan in July or August 2006, although the United States will continue to be the largest troop contributing nation and will continue Operation Enduring Freedom intended to locate and destroy insurgents and terrorists operating in Afghanistan. Insurgent activity, which consists primarily of infiltration of Afghan villages and, to a lesser extent, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks against U.S. and NATO forces, has seen an upsurge in recent months, including large, 100 man-plus attacks on Coalition forces. A report suggests that instead of building a 70,000 soldier Afghan National Army as agreed to in the 2002 Bonn Conference, the Administration intends to support a 50,000 soldier force.

Despite the efforts of the Coalition and Afghan government, poppy production in 2006 is expected to surpass last year's crop and reported cooperation between drug lords and insurgents has added a new dimension and possible complications to efforts to combat the insurgents and the growing drug trade.

Congress in its oversight role may choose to examine the impact of an apparently renewed insurgency, NATO's assumption of command in Afghanistan and how NATO will prosecute counterterror operations, and U.S. and NATO military support of Afghan counternarcotics operations. This report will be updated as events warrant.

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# U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan: Issues for Congress

The U.S. military has been involved in Afghanistan since the fall of 2001 when Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) toppled the Taliban regime and attacked the Al Qaeda terrorist network hosted in Afghanistan by the Taliban. A significant U.S. military presence in the country could continue for a number of years as U.S., North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Coalition, and Afghan National Army (ANA) forces attempt to stabilize the country by defeating the insurgency, facilitating reconstruction, and combating Afghanistan's illegal drug trade.

## Current U.S. Forces

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), as of May 1, 2006 there were approximately 22,900 U.S. service members in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> The majority of U.S. combat forces comprising the 7<sup>th</sup> OEF rotation to Afghanistan is from the Fort Drum, NY-based 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, which is the division's third year-long deployment to Afghanistan in five years.<sup>2</sup> About 5,800 troops from the division's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, as well as Division Headquarters and other supporting units are from Fort Drum while another 1,300 soldiers are from the division's 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade, stationed at Fort Polk, LA. The division also expects to have approximately 2,000 Canadian, Dutch, and British troops eventually under division control.<sup>3</sup> About 1,200 U.S. Marines from the Oahu, HI-based 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines, were also deployed as part of OEF-7<sup>4</sup> and an unknown number of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel from all services are part of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force that is conducting special operations missions in and around Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> After the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines finished their rotation to Afghanistan in mid-May, they were not replaced by another Marine Corps unit, as the Marines will no longer be deploying combat units to Afghanistan as part of the regular rotation of forces.<sup>6</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division is expected to be replaced in early 2007 by the division

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<sup>1</sup> DOD Information Paper "Congressional Research Service Request for Boots on the Ground (BOG) Statistics for Iraq and Afghanistan, May 5, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> William Kates, "10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Deploys," *Army Times*, Jan. 27, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "The Marines Corps as of April 5," *Marine Corps Times*, Apr. 17, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> CFC-A Fact Sheet "About CFC-A," dated Jan. 21, 2006, [<http://www.cfc-a.centcom.mil/Information/Coalition%20forces%20in%20Afghanistan.htm>], accessed Apr. 27, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Lowe, "A Mission Ends," *Marine Corps Times*, May 29, 2006.

headquarters of the Fort Bragg, NC-based 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and one of the division's infantry brigades.

Aside from naval and air force special operations forces, U.S. Navy and Air Force service members are reportedly playing an increased role in ground operations in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup> Six of the twelve U.S.-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are commanded by naval officers and 140 sailors are now serving on U.S. PRTs. According to a Navy spokesman, not including Naval Special Forces, a little more than 500 sailors are presently serving in Afghanistan. The other six U.S. PRTs are led by Air Force officers and are made up of both soldiers and airmen.

## **Drawdown of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan**

On December 20, 2005, DOD announced that one battalion-sized infantry task force from the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade stationed at Ft. Polk would deploy to Afghanistan to assist in the transition of coalition operations in southern Afghanistan in mid-2006 to NATO.<sup>8</sup> DOD attributes this reduction to NATO's growing presence in Afghanistan as well as continued growth and progress of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP).<sup>9</sup> DOD's decision to deploy only a portion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade is expected to reduce U.S. troop levels by about 2,500 troops.<sup>10</sup>

## **Coalition Forces in Afghanistan**

Non-U.S. Coalition forces in Afghanistan are distributed between the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) — which conducts counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations — and the NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), which provides security for approximately 50% of Afghanistan. Some countries contribute forces to both OEF and ISAF, while others contribute strictly to ISAF. At present, 21 nations contribute approximately 3,100 troops to OEF<sup>11</sup> and 35 NATO and non-NATO nations contribute about 12,000 troops, with the top five contributing nations as of January 2006 being: Germany (over 2,200); Italy (more than 2,000); Canada (over 800); and Spain and France (each over 500).<sup>12</sup> As NATO assumes control of overall Afghan security, these numbers will likely change significantly.

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<sup>7</sup> Information in this section is from Kate Wiltrout, "Navy's Role in Afghanistan Grows," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, May 21, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs News Release, No. 1309-05, "Operation Enduring Freedom Rotation Adjustment Announced," Dec. 20, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> CFC-A Fact Sheet "About CFC-A," dated Jan. 21, 2006, [<http://www.cfc-a.centcom.mil/Information/Coalition%20forces%20in%20Afghanistan.htm>], accessed Apr. 27, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> NATO in Afghanistan Press Fact Sheet, Updated Jan. 19, 2006.

## Recent and Current Operations

**U.S. and Afghan Operations.** In early February 2006, Afghan forces, backed by U.S. warplanes, fought insurgents in the Sangin district in southern Helmand province after insurgents ambushed an Afghan police convoy.<sup>13</sup> The battle — characterized as the largest battle in Afghanistan in months — began the evening of February 2, when approximately 200 Taliban fighters ambushed the police convoy and reinforcements were sent to support the ANP. U.S. A-10 ground attack aircraft and B-52 bombers, as well as British Harrier jets supported Afghan ground forces over two days of fighting which resulted in about 20 Taliban deaths and 7 Afghan police and soldiers killed. On February 7, a U.S. service member was killed when his patrol came under fire near the central city of Mihtarlam.<sup>14</sup>

On February 13, four U.S. soldiers were killed when their Humvee was hit by a remote-controlled explosive device while they were patrolling with Afghan National Army (ANA) forces in the southern province of Uruzgan.<sup>15</sup> After the attack, the patrol came under small arms and rocket-propelled grenade attack, forcing the patrol to call in U.S. Apache helicopter and B-52 bomber support. On March 1, one U.S. soldier was killed and two wounded in a clash with Taliban insurgents in Uruzgan province, after a roadside explosive destroyed a U.S. vehicle and U.S. forces engaged the insurgents.<sup>16</sup> Four U.S. soldiers were killed in eastern Afghanistan on March 11, when a roadside bomb exploded next to them while they were attempting to clear a road for civilian traffic.<sup>17</sup> On March 25, U.S. and Afghan troops, supported by U.S. aircraft, fought suspected Taliban insurgents in southern Afghanistan, resulting in one U.S. service member and seven militants dead.<sup>18</sup> Taliban insurgents launched what was described as a “rare” concentrated attack on a U.S. base in southern Afghanistan on March 29, resulting in the deaths of a U.S. soldier, a Canadian soldier, and 32 insurgents.<sup>19</sup> According to U.S. officials, 12 of the insurgents died while assaulting the base and another 20 were killed by Coalition

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<sup>13</sup> Noor Khan, “U.S., Afghan Troops Fight Insurgents in Afghanistan,” *Army Times*, Feb. 3, 2006; Paul Watson, “20 Taliban Reported Killed in Battle,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 4, 2006; Carlotta Gall, “Fighting Rages as U.S. and Afghans Hunt Taliban,” *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Associated Press, “Afghanistan: Fighting Kills U.S. Service Member,” *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Carlotta Gall, “4 U.S. Soldiers Killed by Blast in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, Feb. 14, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Carlotta Gall, “G.I. Killed in Clash with Taliban,” *New York Times*, Mar. 1, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Sultan M. Munadi, “4 American Soldiers Killed in Afghan Blast,” *New York Times*, Mar. 13, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Associated Press, “8 Killed in Fighting in Afghanistan,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Mar. 26, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Rahim Faisez, “U.S. Troops Repel Blitz by Taliban,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 30, 2006.

aircraft and artillery. On April 22, a U.S. soldier was killed in a firefight with insurgents in southern Uruzgan province.<sup>20</sup>

**Operation Mountain Lion.**<sup>21</sup> Coalition and ANA forces launched “Operation Mountain Lion” on March 25, in Kunar province east of Kabul with a series of predawn ground and air assaults. U.S. ground forces consisted of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Regiment. Air support was provided by U.S. Air Force F-15s, A-10s, and B-52s, with U.S. Air Force Global Hawk and Predator unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and KC-135 and KC-10 aircraft providing aerial refueling. Soldiers from the ANA’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 203<sup>rd</sup> Corps also participated in the operation, bringing the total ground forces to just over 2,500 U.S., Coalition, and ANA troops. On May 5, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division crashed during operations in support of Operation Mountain Lion, killing 10 U.S. soldiers.<sup>22</sup>

**Reported Results.** According to the (DOD,<sup>23</sup> Operation Mountain Lion has recently transitioned into a “security and reconstruction phase” but during the combat phase of the operation, over 650 patrols — many of which included ANA forces — were conducted, killing up to 80 Taliban insurgents. Twelve significant weapons and ammunition caches were discovered during the operation and medical teams from the coalition treated over 8,000 Afghan civilians. Over 13,000 radios were also distributed during the operation as a means for Afghans to receive news and stay connected to the Afghan government. Around mid-May, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines who also participated in operation Mountain Lion, concluded their service in Afghanistan, transitioned their responsibilities to a 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division unit, and headed home - the last Marine Corps unit planned to be deployed to Afghanistan as part of normal troop rotations.

**Renewed Insurgent Attacks.** Around mid-May, insurgent attacks in southern Afghanistan — primarily Kandahar, Helmand, and Uruzgan provinces — took what has been described as a “dramatic upswing” which some believe are intended to test NATO’s resolve as it begins to assume responsibility for the southern region.<sup>24</sup> According to reports, between 80 and 90 Taliban insurgents as well as a

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<sup>20</sup> Carlotta Gall, “Afghanistan: G.I. Killed in South,” *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Information in this section, unless otherwise annotated, is from American Forces Press Service, “Coalition Launches Operation Mountain Lion in Afghanistan,” American Forces Information Services, Apr. 12, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Joan Biskupic, “Once Again, Fort Drum Hit Hard by Fatal Crash,” *USA Today*, May 8, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Information in this section is from a DOD News Briefing with Brigadier General Ham, May 23, 2006 and Donna Miles “Afghan Violence Reflects Afghan Troop’s Progress, Taliban Frustration,” American Forces Information Services, May 23, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Pamela Constable, “Afghanistan Rocked as 105 Die in Violence,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 2006 and Jonathan S. Landay, “As NATO Replaces U.S., Attacks Intensify,” *Miami Herald*, May 19, 2006.

number of civilians were killed, primarily by U.S. aircraft, including a long-range B-1 bomber.<sup>25</sup>

On May 20, a U.S. soldier was reported killed and six wounded in a battle with insurgents in Oruzgan province and two French special forces officers were killed fighting Taliban insurgents in Kandahar province.<sup>26</sup> On May 22, 16 Afghan civilians were killed by a U.S. airstrike when Taliban insurgents took shelter in a compound near the village of Azizi, about 30 miles west of Kandahar, and U.S. A-10 attack aircraft strafed the compound, killing 16 civilians and between 20 to 80 insurgents.<sup>27</sup>

**Coalition and Afghan Operations.** Other non-U.S. Coalition forces have been involved in ground operations, apart from ISAF security operations, either unilaterally or in conjunction with Afghan forces. Reports suggest that a 200-man strong Australian special forces task group, due to rotate home to Australia in September 2006 after a one-year tour of duty in southern Afghanistan, has been involved in a number of heavy skirmishes with Taliban and Al Qaeda insurgents.<sup>28</sup> In mid-March 2006, Dutch Special Forces captured 18 suspected Taliban insurgents and transferred them to U.S. custody.<sup>29</sup>

On April 14, ANA forces backed by a company (about 120 soldiers) of Canadian infantry and U.S. helicopters engaged an insurgent force believed to number between 50 to 60 fighters in southern Kandahar province reportedly resulting in the deaths of over a dozen insurgents.<sup>30</sup> Canadian forces reportedly took over responsibility for large portions of Kandahar province from U.S. forces in February 2006.<sup>31</sup> During the period of April 29-30, Afghan and Canadian troops killed as many as 27 militants during combat operations in southern Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> On April 22, four Canadian soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb while on patrol in Kandahar province<sup>33</sup> and two Italian soldiers were killed and four wounded by a roadside bomb while on patrol south of Kabul on May 5.<sup>34</sup> One female Canadian

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Noor Khan, "U.S. Soldier Among 34 Killed in Afghan Fighting," *Boston Globe*, May 21, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Pamela Constable, "U.S. Voices Regret for Death of 16 Afghans," *Washington Post*, May 25, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Patrick Walters, "200 More Troops to Afghanistan," *The Australian*, Feb. 22, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> "Netherlands/Afghanistan: Dutch Special Forces Deliver Prisoners Up to the United States," *Atlantic News*, No. 3763, Mar. 28, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ruhullah Khapalwak and Catlotta Gall, "Dozens Reported Killed in Attack on Taliban," *New York Times*, Apr. 16, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Coalition Kills 27 Militants in Afghanistan," *CNN.com*, May 1, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Carlotta Gall, "Afghan Bomb on Road Kills 4 Canadians," *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> "Bomb Kills 2 Italians Near Kabul," *International Herald Tribune*, May 6, 2006.



soldier was killed in southern Afghanistan in a series of attacks thought to be part of an effort to disrupt NATO's ongoing deployment into southern Afghanistan.<sup>35</sup>

**Pakistani Military Operations.** Pakistani military operations in its tribal areas as well as along the Pakistan-Afghan border continue to play a significant role in combating the insurgency in Afghanistan. Lieutenant General (LTG) Eikenberry, CFC-A commander, credits the 70,000 Pakistani troops stationed along the 2,000 kilometer border with helping to secure Afghanistan's presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>36</sup> While many U.S. officials praise Pakistan's military activities, some U.S. and Afghan officials question if Pakistan is doing enough in combating Taliban insurgents.

Pakistani forces have reportedly conducted a variety of operations in their tribal areas intended to rid these areas of militants or to drive them into Afghanistan where ANA and Coalition forces can engage them. On March 1, Pakistani military forces reportedly attacked a militant hideout in the North Waziristan Tribal Region, killing or wounding between 25-30 militants.<sup>37</sup> Pakistani forces, backed by artillery and helicopters, reportedly recaptured a Pakistani town, Miran Shah, near the Afghan border from local armed tribesman believed to be supporting Taliban insurgents — killing over 40 tribesmen.<sup>38</sup> After three days of fighting in the region, Pakistani authorities estimated that over 100 pro-Taliban and Al Qaeda militants had been killed.<sup>39</sup> Pakistani forces reportedly killed at least 18 militants who attacked a government outpost near Tith Nary on March 24<sup>40</sup> and 20 militants were reportedly killed and 19 captured in a clash in the North Waziristan region near the Afghan border on April 5.<sup>41</sup> Reports also suggest that Pakistan's military operations may have forced hundreds of Taliban insurgents out of Pakistan and into Afghanistan's Helmand province where Great Britain is deploying its combat forces<sup>42</sup>.

## International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF)

On May 4, 2006, the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) assumed command of ISAF 9 from the NATO Rapid Deployment Corps - Italy

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Farhan Bokhari and Rachel Morajee, "Afghans Call on U.S. to Improve Security," *London Financial Times*, Feb. 13, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> John Diamond, "Pentagon: Pakistani Forces Roust Terrorists," *USA Today*, Mar. 1, 2006.

<sup>38</sup> John Lancaster, "Pakistani Forces Take Back Town from Tribesmen," *Washington Post*, Mar. 6, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Associated Press, "Fighting in Pakistani Tribal Area May Have Killed 100 Militants," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 7, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Zulfiqar Ali, "Pakistani Forces Kill 18 Militants," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 25, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Zulfiqar Ali, "Troops Battle Rebels in Pakistan: 20 Killed," *Angeles Times*, Apr. 6, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Christina Lamb and Tim Albone, "UK Forces Under Threat as Pakistan Forces Taliban Out," *The Sunday Times*, May 21, 2006.

(NRDC-IT) which had commanded ISAF since August 2005.<sup>43</sup> ISAF is a NATO-led organization, consisting of approximately 9,000 troops from 26 NATO nations, as well as troops from 9 partner and 2 nonaligned countries.<sup>44</sup> The United States has approximately 200 troops assigned to ISAF, but these troops serve primarily in staff and support roles. ISAF operates under a series of U.N. mandates and conducts security patrols in Kabul and in northern and southern Afghanistan and runs several Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) located throughout Afghanistan. In addition, ISAF coordinates Civil Military Cooperation projects throughout the area of operations.<sup>45</sup> ISAF does not participate in offensive operations against the Taliban and Al Qaeda — these operations are carried out by the U.S.-led Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)-180 and forces from 19 other countries<sup>46</sup> (including some countries that have other forces assigned to ISAF) and the ANA. Sometime in 2007, the ARRC is expected to relinquish its control of ISAF to a composite NATO headquarters.<sup>47</sup>

## NATO Assumption of Overall Afghan Security

On May 4, British LTG David Richards, commander of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), took command of ISAF and NATO forces in Afghanistan and by the end of July 2006, LTG Richards and the ARRC are expected to take command of additional NATO forces now moving into southern Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> The ARRC is a Rheindahlen, Germany-based deployable NATO headquarters consisting of approximately 450 troops from 17 nations, including about 40 U.S. soldiers.<sup>49</sup>

NATO's Supreme Commander, U.S. Marine General James Jones, has reportedly stated that if all goes according to plans, that NATO forces could complete their deployment to southern Afghanistan by the end of August and that NATO could be able to assume command of other forces in country at a later date, pending a NATO political decision.<sup>50</sup> Once the expansion is completed, the media reports that NATO could have between 23,000 to 25,000 troops under its command — including

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<sup>43</sup> Carlotta Gall, "Britain Takes NATO Command as Afghanistan Mission Grows," *New York Times*, May 5, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> "NATO to Head South in Afghanistan," as of Jan. 9, 2006, [<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/12-december/31208a.htm>].

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> See [[http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/enduring-freedom\\_orbat-03.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/enduring-freedom_orbat-03.htm)] for a listing of these countries as of June 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Nicholas Fiorenza, "ISAF to be Commanded by a Composite Headquarters," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Mar. 15, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Carlotta Gall, "Britain Takes NATO Command as Afghanistan Mission Grows," *New York Times*, May 5, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Giordano, "British General Will Lead Mission in Afghanistan," *Mideast Stars and Stripes*, Mar. 11, 2006.

<sup>50</sup> "NATO/Afghanistan: Phase 4 of NATO Deployment in Afghanistan by August Maybe," *Atlantic News*, No. 3765, Apr. 4, 2006, p. 2.

between 6,000 to 10,000 U.S. soldiers.<sup>51</sup> This would be the first time since World War II<sup>52</sup> that a British general has been in charge of U.S. forces in combat.<sup>53</sup> Despite NATO's assumption of overall command, General Jones stressed that U.S. and foreign special forces units would continue their counterterrorism operations separately within the scope of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).<sup>54</sup> Under this command arrangement, the Commander of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 76 — the U.S.-led organization responsible for OEF — U.S. Major General Benjamin Freakley (also commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division) will serve as a deputy commander of ISAF under British LTG David Richards.<sup>55</sup>

**Additional NATO Forces.** While NATO has not released a comprehensive list of NATO units presently involved in or slated to deploy to Afghanistan, some information is available regarding the contributions of specific countries.

**Great Britain.** Great Britain reportedly will deploy approximately 3,300 troops primarily from its 16<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Brigade to southern Afghanistan.<sup>56</sup> In October 2006, the 16<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Brigade is expected to be replaced by Royal Marines from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commando Brigade.<sup>57</sup> Great Britain also currently has about 1,100 soldiers assigned to ISAF operating around Kabul.

**Canada.**<sup>58</sup> Canada has approximately 2,300 personnel deployed to Afghanistan. Canada has a 1,000 soldier battlegroup organized around the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry stationed in Kandahar supporting NATO's expansion into southern Afghanistan.

**The Netherlands.** The Dutch government will send approximately 1,400 troops of Task Force Uruzgan supported by AH-64 attack helicopters and F-16

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> The last time that U.S. forces served under a British commander during wartime was in late 1944 when British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery took command of the U.S. Ninth Army during the Ardennes Offensive.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Giordano, "British General Will Lead Mission in Afghanistan," *Mideast Stars and Stripes*, Mar. 11, 2006 and Michael Evans and Tim Albone, "Briton Takes Charge of Fight to Tame Warlords," *London Times*, May 2, 2006.

<sup>54</sup> "NATO/Afghanistan: Phase 4 of NATO Deployment in Afghanistan by August Maybe," *Atlantic News*, No. 3765, Apr. 4, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Fiorenza, "ISAF to be Commanded by Composite Headquarters," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Mar. 15, 2006, p. 6 and Joseph Giordano, "British General Will Lead Mission in Afghanistan," *Mideast Stars and Stripes*, Mar. 11, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Sean Rayment "Marines to Seek and Destroy Taliban Insurgents," *London Sunday Telegraph*, Apr. 16, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Information in this section is from a background paper from the Canadian Defense Ministry "Canadian Forces Operations in Afghanistan," Apr. 18, 2006.

fighter aircraft to the southern part of Afghanistan.<sup>59</sup> The core of the deployment will be the 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion Air Assault Regiment Van Heutsz. Currently, the Netherlands has 400 troops stationed in Kabul and, until April 2006, had approximately 250 troops deployed as part of OEF. The Netherlands will take over the U.S.-led PRT in Uruzgan and the Dutch government has committed to maintain Task Force Uruzgan in the PRT through August 2008.

**Denmark.** Denmark will contribute 360 troops with some going to various headquarters and PRTs and the majority (260 soldiers) in the form of a reconnaissance squadron attached to the British 16<sup>th</sup> Air Assault Brigade battlegroup.<sup>60</sup>

**France.** France has deployed the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* and its associated carrier air wing to the region and is providing air support to both ISAF and OEF.<sup>61</sup> French forces last flew air support in Afghanistan in November 2005, logging over 400 sorties in support of ISAF and OEF. France has approximately 1,800 troops in Afghanistan, with the majority assigned to ISAF and training the ANA, but some French troops — primarily special forces — are part of OEF.<sup>62</sup>

## Provincial Reconstruction Teams<sup>63</sup>

PRTs are small, civil-military teams designed to extend the authority of the Afghan central government beyond Kabul and to facilitate aid and reconstruction projects. PRTs have enabled coalition forces to extend a degree of security to outlying regions and have also permitted U.S. forces to establish personal relationships with local Afghan leaders which some believe has helped to diminish insurgent influence in a number of regions. As of the summer of 2006, there were 22 PRTs — 13 supervised by the Coalition and 9 by NATO.<sup>64</sup> The 13 PRTs run by the Coalition are located in the south and east — generally considered to be moderate to high threat areas. Twelve of the PRTs are U.S. and one is run by New Zealand. The nine PRTs administered by NATO are located in the north and west in low to moderate threat areas and cover approximately 50% of Afghanistan.

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<sup>59</sup> Information provide by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, May 30, 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Discussion with the Danish Defense Attache, May 10, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Nicholas Fiorenza “French Carrier to Support OEF and ISAF Operations,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, April 12, 2006, p. 13 and Melissa Koskovich, “French Forces Rejoin Operation Enduring Freedom,” American Forces Information Services, May 9, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> Information Paper from the French Embassy, “National Defense,” Apr. 7, 2005.

<sup>63</sup> For detailed information on PRTs, to include specific information on each PRT, see CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

<sup>64</sup> Information in this section is taken from a briefing paper by Dr. Joseph J. Collins of the National Defense University (NDU) titled “Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Past, Present, and Future,” July 2005.

**Composition of U.S. PRTs.** U.S. PRTs consist of between 50 and 100 military and civilian personnel.<sup>65</sup> Civilian personnel usually consist of a U.S. State Department representative, a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) representative, and a representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). There is also usually an Afghan representative from the Ministry of the Interior on the PRT. In terms of military personnel, each PRT has a commander, two civil affairs teams with four members each, operational and administrative staff, and force protection elements — usually a platoon-sized (40 soldier) force.

**U.S. Joint Forces Command Findings.**<sup>66</sup> In October 2005, an interagency team from the U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), the State Department, (DOS), and USAID, assessed PRT operations in Afghanistan to identify “best practices” and to improve cooperation and coordination among the various U.S. agencies involved in the PRTs. Some of the highlighted findings of this study include:<sup>67</sup>

- “PRTs are most appropriate in a mid-range of violence where instability still precludes heavy non-governmental organization (NGO) involvement, but where violence is not so acute that combat operations predominate. If PRTs are used outside this range, the model needs to be changed”;
- U.S. PRT military commanders need to incorporate U.S. representatives from other government agencies into PRT strategy development and decision making or the PRTs will fall short of their goals;
- To better fill key US PRT positions, civilian agencies need to assign personnel with appropriate training and experience to PRTs. In addition the tour lengths for military and civilian personnel need to be aligned to ensure team development;
- The U.S. government needs to develop pre-deployment team training for all PRT personnel; and
- As more Coalition PRTs transition to ISAF [NATO] control, the United States should ensure that a minimum level of U.S. staff and funding remains in place for continuity of operations and a smooth transition.

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<sup>65</sup> Information in this section is taken from a United States Joint Forces Command Report, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan - An Interagency Assessment,” Apr. 26, 2006. [Available from author]

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

## The Afghan National Army (ANA)

Training of the ANA commenced shortly after U.S. and Coalition forces defeated Taliban forces in early 2002. The Bonn II Conference on rebuilding Afghanistan in December 2002 endorsed a 70,000 strong Afghan National Army.<sup>68</sup> Although the Afghan National Army initially experienced difficulties in terms of morale and desertion, most analysts agree that the multi-ethnic ANA has developed into a credible fighting force, but one that is still heavily dependent on support from Coalition forces.<sup>69</sup> As of January 31, 2006, the United States and other members of the Coalition had trained approximately 26,900 troops (14,500 of which are considered combat troops) and established five regional commands in Kabul, Gardez, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif.<sup>70</sup> On June 5, 2006 the strength of the Afghan National Army reportedly was at 35,000 soldiers.<sup>71</sup> While previous emphasis was on recruiting and training a large number of soldiers, reports suggest that the ANA is placing more emphasis on the quality of recruits and officers.<sup>72</sup> One Afghan corps commander reportedly said that 80% of his soldiers and 50% of his officers are illiterate and only 20% have any professional knowledge of how to serve in the military, with the remaining 80% comprised of former militiamen or new recruits.<sup>73</sup> In order to build and maintain a professional army that can eventually assume the country's security responsibilities, many experts advise that increased literacy and educational standards for soldiers and their officers should be supported.

**A 50,000 Soldier Afghan National Army?**<sup>74</sup> One report suggests that the Administration now supports the creation of a 50,000 soldier ANA as opposed to the 70,000 soldier force that the United States and other countries agreed to at the Bonn II Conference in December 2002 and later re-affirmed at the London Conference on Afghan Reconstruction. The Pentagon reportedly believes that Afghanistan will be unable to support a 70,000 soldier force and that Afghanistan won't even be able to pay for a 50,000 soldier force until 2063. The Afghan government reportedly opposes a reduction to a 50,000 soldier force and U.S. military officials acknowledge that a 50,000 soldier force would mean that the Afghan government would have to accept a greater degree of risk. Some suggest that the 50,000 soldier approach is short-sighted and could significantly affect our relationship with what many consider a struggling Afghan national government.

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<sup>68</sup> Joshua Kucera, "Afghanistan Looks to Army Expansion," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Oct. 13, 2004, p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Scott Baldauf, "A "Half Full" Afghan Army," *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 10, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. State Department Fact Sheet, "Afghanistan National Security Forces," Jan. 31, 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Ken Hall, "Afghan Sergeant Major Goes Where None Have Gone Before," *Army News Service*, June 5, 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Baldauf.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Information in this section is taken from Vance Serchuk, "Don't Undercut the Afghan Army," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2006.

## Counternarcotics Operations<sup>75</sup>

**Increased Poppy Production and Cooperation Between the Insurgents and Drug Traffickers.** Reports suggest that Afghan poppy<sup>76</sup> production could increase by 40% from 2005 levels, despite Afghan national government and Coalition counternarcotics efforts.<sup>77</sup> U.S. and NATO senior leadership have characterized Afghanistan's illegal narcotics trade as "the number one threat in Afghanistan," and have warned that Afghanistan runs the risk of becoming a "narco-state" unless the opium trade is curbed.<sup>78</sup>

A number of reports suggests that Taliban insurgents have aligned themselves with Afghan drug lords, which is further complicating the security situation in Afghanistan.<sup>79</sup> Allegedly, Taliban insurgents have teamed up with the drug lords to oppose the Afghan government's campaign to eradicate poppy fields and have levied a \$50 per kilogram tax on the heroin produced from the poppies as well as a 10% tax on farmers cultivating poppies in exchange for providing security and attacking government police and drug enforcement efforts.<sup>80</sup> Some believe that the Taliban are using their drug-related money to finance an insurgent force designed to sustain the insurgency for many years.<sup>81</sup>

**U.S. and NATO's Role in Countering Drugs.** The U.S. military is not directly involved in counternarcotics operations in Afghanistan and this will not likely change when NATO assumes control of operations in Afghanistan. The U.S. military has provided limited support to Afghan national government counternarcotics operations such as providing transportation and intelligence to Afghan national police forces. NATO forces will also not be directly involved with poppy eradication efforts,<sup>82</sup> which calls into question whether or not U.S. and NATO counterinsurgency efforts are sufficient if they fail to actively address the Afghan

<sup>75</sup> For a more detailed discussion see CRS Report RL32686, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

<sup>76</sup> Poppies are grown to produce opium which is refined to produce heroin. Afghanistan produces about 90% of the world's opium.

<sup>77</sup> Daniel Cooney, "Harvesting the Profits from Opium," *Washington Times*, Mar. 18, 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Judy Dempsey, "General Calls Drugs the Biggest Test for Afghans," *International Herald Tribune*, May 20, 2006 and Paul Ames, "Drugs Called No. 1 Threat in Afghanistan," ABC News, May 18, 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Guy Taylor, "Resurgent Taliban Ties to Drugs Seen as Global Problem," *Washington Times*, May 20, 2006; Daniel Cooney, "Harvesting the Profits from Opium," *Washington Times*, Mar. 18, 2006; Emmanuel Duparcq, "Taliban Teams Up With Drug Barons," *Washington Times*, Mar. 18, 2006; and Phil Zabriskie, "Dangers Up Ahead," *Time*, March 13, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Taylor.

<sup>81</sup> Zabriskie.

<sup>82</sup> Judy Dempsey, "General Calls Drugs the Biggest Test for Afghans," *International Herald Tribune*, May 20, 2006 and Carlotta Gall, "Britain Takes NATO Command as Afghanistan Mission Grows," *New York Times*, May 5, 2006.

drug problem, which allegedly provides significant financial and material resources to the insurgents.

## Issues for Congress

**A Renewed Insurgency?** The Taliban insurgency appears to have become resurgent since the Afghan parliamentary elections. What are the implications of this for the United States and NATO as they attempt to defeat the insurgency and eventually transfer responsibility for Afghanistan's security to the Afghan National Army?

Some maintain that the Taliban may be moving its insurgency to a new phase by inundating southern Afghanistan with fighters and weapons.<sup>83</sup> Reportedly, the Afghan governor of Uruzgan province has stated that Taliban insurgents now number several times more the number of ANA and police forces in the province.<sup>84</sup> Some Afghan officials suggest that the U.S. withdrawal from southern Afghanistan and NATO's repeated statements that it would not be actively seeking insurgent forces have given a lift to and emboldened the Taliban insurgents.<sup>85</sup> While NATO and U.S. military officials have downplayed insurgent activities, stating that "Taliban and Al Qaeda are not in a position to where they can restart an insurgency of any size and major scope,"<sup>86</sup> these officials now acknowledge that the insurgents have grown in "strength and influence" in the spring of 2006 with "a hard-core group of Taliban numbering in the hundreds" operating in southern Afghanistan.<sup>87</sup>

## NATO Command Issues and the Prosecution of Counterinsurgency Operations.

**NATO Command Issues.** Issues concerning NATO's assumption of command in Afghanistan include:

- Is there a formal transition plan for the transfer of command to NATO?;
- What will be the U.S. military role in the NATO command structure?;
- What legal authority, if any, will NATO commanders hold over U.S. troops under its command? Will U.S. forces be held accountable to NATO rules and regulations concerning military conduct?;

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<sup>83</sup> Carlotta Gall, "Taliban Threat Is Said to Grow in Afghan South," *New York Times*, May 3, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Rowan Scarborough, "NATO Shrugs Off Afghan Violence," *Washington Times*, Mar. 7, 2006.

<sup>87</sup> Noor Khan, "Battles Increase in Remote Mountain Areas," *Miami Herald*, May 25, 2006 and "Insurgents Show Rising Strength in Afghanistan," *ArmyTimes.com*, May 24, 2006.



- How much say will NATO have in security and stability operations and offensive operations designed to destroy the Taliban/Al Qaeda insurgency? Will NATO be able to “overrule” the United States or change existing policies?;
- What are NATO’s long-term plans to provide adequate forces for security and stability and offensive operations? Has NATO secured commitments from NATO members for troops and military resources for an extended basis or will NATO continue to “pass the hat” to obtain forces needed for Afghanistan?;
- Does NATO have a comprehensive and effective counternarcotics plan for Afghanistan?; and
- Does NATO have a long-term strategy to transition all security and offensive military operations to the Afghan government and its armed forces and police?

***NATO and the Counterinsurgency Campaign.*** It is possible that Congress might explore in greater detail, NATO’s charter and “rules of engagement” for Afghanistan. According to NATO, its charter will be:<sup>88</sup>

- Assisting the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country;
- Conducting stability and security operations in co-ordination with the Afghan national security forces;
- Assisting the Afghan government with the security sector reform process;
- Mentoring and supporting the Afghan National Army;
- Supporting Afghan government programs to disarm illegally armed groups; and
- Supporting Afghan government and internationally-sanctioned counter-narcotics efforts within limits (NOT participating in poppy eradication or destruction of processing facilities or taking military action against narcotics producers).

Given this charter, some question how proactive NATO’s role will be in dealing with insurgents and drug traffickers. If NATO’s “rules of engagement” permit NATO forces to use force only in self-defense, a situation could arise where NATO forces during the conduct of security operations might encounter insurgents and/or traffickers

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<sup>88</sup> NATO Press Release, “Revised Operational Plan for NATO’s Expanding Mission in Afghanistan,” updated May 18, 2006.

and if they choose not to attack NATO forces, NATO might not take action against them. Another scenario might be for insurgents to heavily target NATO forces in an attempt to force NATO units to exceed their mandate by undertaking offensive combat operations against insurgents, possibly causing political difficulties between NATO nations that will likely be politically sensitive to “mission creep.”

**Size of the Afghan National Army.** The Administration appears to be supporting a 50,000 soldier Afghan National Army as opposed to the 70,000 soldier force that it committed to in 2002. Critics of this policy suggest that it is based on a desire to cut costs and does not take into account the current situation where insurgents appear to be stepping up both conventional attacks and explosive device and suicide attacks against Coalition forces. In addition, some analysts maintain that a 50,000 soldier force would be inadequate to confront the insurgency and defend Afghanistan’s western border with Iran. Some suggest that such an approach, which might make sense from a short-term financial perspective, could result in an undermanned Afghan National Army and require an indefinite commitment of U.S. and foreign troops to provide for Afghanistan’s security needs.

**Counternarcotics Operations.** The current U.S. military policy on counternarcotics operations and NATO’s mandate for participating in counternarcotics operations may come under congressional scrutiny. While “burning poppy fields” and conducting combat operations on narcotics-related facilities might be too extreme a course of action for U.S. and NATO troops, a more active role short of direct action might have an impact on insurgent activities. According to one report, while the solution to the illegal opium problem requires an interdisciplinary approach due to the central role opium production plays in Afghanistan’s economy, NATO [and U.S. forces] should play a greater role “in targeting drug laboratories, opium stockpiles, and trafficking routes” as this would “not only help Afghan counternarcotics efforts but also curtails the flow of drugs to Europe, which gets 90 percent of its heroin from Afghanistan.”<sup>89</sup> Opponents of a more active U.S. and NATO counternarcotics role could argue that these efforts would shift resources and focus away from helping to stabilize the security situation, which could undermine the credibility of the Afghan central government.

## Additional Reading

CRS Report RL30588, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

CRS Report RL32686, *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher M. Blanchard.

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<sup>89</sup> Ali A. Jalali, “The Future of Afghanistan,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, Spring 2006, p. 6.