

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on
The Challenges of Security in Afghanistan
September 21, 2006**

Today, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee meets to discuss the security situation in Afghanistan and the role being played by NATO's International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF). We are honored to welcome our good friend, General James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, to share his insights on NATO's operations in Afghanistan. General Jones has testified several times before our Committee, most recently in February 2006. As always, we look forward to engaging him on a topic of critical importance to U.S. national security.

Recently, Taliban attacks in Afghanistan have occurred with greater frequency and coordination. They have extended well beyond the South and East, where most of the fighting has been located. Although the hunt for al Qaeda terrorists continues, the primary threat to the stability of Afghanistan is Taliban insurgents who are challenging NATO forces in greater numbers, sowing dissent among Afghans, cooperating with the narcotics trade, and complicating security efforts in ways that inhibit the rule of law and reconstruction.

The Afghan people suffered under the Taliban, and most Afghans have welcomed the advances in personal freedom, political participation, and educational opportunities that have come during the last five years. The recent increase in violence in Afghanistan clearly is not evidence of a popular uprising. But to the degree that there is discontent, disillusionment, or fear among the Afghan people due to their security situation, trust in the Afghan government and NATO will dissipate. Insecurity stemming from insurgent activity by Taliban forces has also caused Afghans in some regions to seek the protection of tribal leaders and warlords, which in turn undercuts the authority of the Afghan government and increases the risk of civil conflict between tribal factions. Given these dynamics, we must dispel any doubts about the commitment of the West to Afghan's emergence as a stable and free society.

With this in mind, it is imperative that NATO countries fulfill their commitments to Afghanistan. NATO is assuming increasing responsibility for this difficult mission. NATO has long provided security in the North and West of Afghanistan. Last month, ISAF added the critical Southern region to its responsibilities. The Eastern sector of Afghanistan is scheduled to be turned over to ISAF by year's end. However, the recent reluctance in NATO capitals to meet the requests of Alliance leaders for troops and resources has complicated this process.

Following many months of intensive discussions with allies, last week General Jones publicly called for an increase in NATO forces for Afghanistan. His voice was echoed by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who commented, "I want to ask nations to do what they promised—and we're not there yet." General Jones estimated that an additional 2,500 NATO troops would be needed for ISAF. Thus far, Poland's offer of 1,000 additional troops is the only concrete response to this appeal.

There should be no doubt that Afghanistan is a crucial test for NATO. The September 11 attacks were planned in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda still operates there, and the fate of the country remains symbolic. If the most prominent and successful alliance in modern history were to fail in its first operation outside of Europe due to a lack of will by its members, the efficacy of NATO and the ability of the international community to take joint action against a terrorist threat would be called into question. Moreover, Afghanistan has a legitimately elected government and a long-suffering people, both of which deserve a chance to succeed without the threat of violent upheaval.

The time when NATO could limit its missions to the defense of continental Europe is far in the past. With the end of the Cold War, the gravest threats to Europe and North America originate from other regions of the world. This requires Europeans and North Americans to be bolder in remaking our alliances, forging new structures, and changing our thinking. We must reorient many of our national security institutions, of which NATO is one of the most important. To be fully relevant to the security and well being of the people of its member nations, NATO must think and act globally.

I believe strongly that NATO is capable of meeting the challenge in Afghanistan. NATO commanders have demonstrated that they understand the complexity of the mission. They know that success in Afghanistan depends on the attitudes of the people, the progress of reconstruction, and the development of the economy, as much as it depends on battlefield successes. But NATO commanders must have the resources to provide security, and they must have the flexibility to use troops to meet Afghanistan's most critical security needs.

Beyond NATO, it is vital that the Afghan Compact, which was signed earlier this year by 60 members of the international community and the Afghan government, be fully funded and implemented. This Compact established a relationship whereby donors would sustain support for the Afghan Government, while it implements its National Development Strategy.

We look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how NATO is responding to recent Taliban tactics. We also would like to learn how NATO forces are coordinating with independently-led U.S. troops and the Afghan Army. What role will U.S. forces and the Coalition play when ISAF takes over the final sector? We also are interested in how NATO is addressing the challenges of accelerating reconstruction and contending with the growing drug trade.

After the testimony of General Jones, we will hear from a second witness, Dr. Barnett Rubin, the Director of Studies and a Senior Fellow at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University. Dr. Rubin is a leading expert on Central Asia and state-building. Among other roles, he has served as special advisor to Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, and U.S. Senators have had the benefit of his counsel through the Aspen Institute program.

We welcome our witnesses and look forward to an enlightening discussion.

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