



NATO and Afghanistan

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



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Why is NATO IN AFGHANISTAN?

NATO is leading a multinational force in Afghanistan to help the Afghan authorities build a sustainable peace in the country, which is recovering from decades of civil war, and to prevent it from becoming a safe haven for terrorists again.

NATO's presence in Afghanistan is a direct result of the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001. In the immediate aftermath, a US-led operation was deployed to Afghanistan to oust al Qaida – the terrorist group responsible for the 9/11 attacks – and the repressive Taliban regime that harboured it.

A follow-on peace-support mission, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), was deployed in 2001. ISAF was initially under the lead of individual NATO Allies, however NATO agreed take command of the force in August 2003.

ISAF is in Afghanistan at the express wish of the country's democratically elected government and is widely supported by the Afghan population. Its presence and mandate is provided for by United Nations Security Council resolutions.



What is

ISAF?

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is the NATO-led multinational force in Afghanistan. ISAF has been in Afghanistan since 2001 under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386, with a peace-enforcement mandate under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Initially, ISAF's objective was to assist the Afghan government in maintaining security in and around Kabul. Since NATO took over command of the force in August 2003, the United Nations Security Council has gradually mandated the expansion of ISAF's operations outside Kabul to cover the whole country.

As part of the international community's overall effort, ISAF is working to create the conditions whereby the Afghan government is able to exercise its authority throughout the country. To achieve this goal, ISAF conducts security operations in order to protect the Afghan people, neutralise insurgents networks and deny sanctuary in Afghanistan to extremists.

ISAF trains, advises and assists the Afghan national security forces, so that they can take over these responsibilities. The NATO-led force also supports the Afghan government in becoming inclusive, accountable and acceptable to the people.



Is NATO acting alone?

NATO's role in Afghanistan is an integral part of the international community's broader engagement.

As of July 2012, fifty nations are contributing troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). They include 22 non-NATO partner nations from around the globe, working alongside the 28 NATO Allies, constituting the biggest coalition in recent history. Altogether, they represent almost a quarter of all the member countries of the United Nations, underlining the broad international support for ISAF's mission.

The solution for Afghanistan cannot be solely military. Addressing the country's challenges requires a comprehensive approach, involving civilian and military actors, aimed not only at providing security but also at promoting good governance, the rule of law and long-term development.

Therefore, the Alliance acts in a supporting role to the Afghan government and works in close coordination with other international partners, including the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, the World Bank, the European Union and the development community.

ISAF troop contributors

(as of July 2012)

Albania*	Netherlands*
Armenia	New Zealand
Australia	Norway*
Austria	Poland*
Azerbaijan	Portugal*
Bahrain	Republic of Korea
Belgium*	Romania*
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Singapore
Bulgaria*	Slovakia*
Canada*	Slovenia*
Croatia*	Spain*
Czech Republic*	Sweden
Denmark*	the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ¹
El Salvador	Tonga
Estonia*	Turkey*
Finland	Ukraine
France*	United Arab Emirates
Georgia	United Kingdom*
Germany*	United States*
Greece*	
Hungary*	
Iceland*	
Ireland	
Italy*	
Jordan	
Latvia*	
Lithuania*	
Luxembourg*	
Malaysia	
Mongolia	
Montenegro	

¹ Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
* Denotes NATO member country.



What difference has international support made?

Since the fall of the Taliban, the lives of Afghan people have improved significantly in terms of security, education, health care, economic opportunity and governance.

- The Afghan national security forces have grown in size and strength and are showing their ability to assume fundamental tasks. Non-existent in 2001, the Afghan National Army is now developing into a full-fledged army, with dedicated intelligence, medical, logistics and aviation capabilities.
- As security improves, key infrastructure is being built, the provision of basic services is being expanded and living conditions are improving.

- Recovering from decades of conflict, the Afghan economy has been growing rapidly: more markets are open and average living standards are rising.
- The Afghan people are benefiting from improved education. School enrolment is up more than eight-fold since 2001, with a much greater increase among girls. Since 2002, many tens of thousands of new teachers have been trained.
- Significant progress has been made in the health sector. Child mortality has halved compared to 2003, while women's life expectancy has increased by over 20 years.

- Ever more Afghans are having their voices heard. Since the fall of the Taliban, the number of media outlets has mushroomed. By late 2011, there were 75 television stations, around one million internet users and hundreds of newspapers, up from nearly none under Taliban rule.

NATO has helped create the conditions in which development can take place. NATO will continue to play its part in supporting the country on its path towards self-reliance.





When will ISAF's mission end?

By the end of 2014, Afghan national security forces are expected to assume full security responsibility for their people and country, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission will end. This is the ambition that Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai set upon his re-election in 2009 and the commitment that both the international community and NATO have made.

The process of transition to Afghan lead for security was launched in 2011. ISAF is progressively shifting from a combat-centric role to a more enabling role focusing on training, advising and assisting the Afghan national security forces to ensure that they are able to assume their full security responsibilities by the end of transition.

In full coordination with the Afghan authorities, ISAF will gradually and responsibly draw down its forces as progress on transition is made. By mid-2013, it is expected that the Afghan national security forces will be in the lead for security across the whole country. The drawdown of ISAF forces will continue until the scheduled completion of transition at the end of 2014.



What will happen

AFTER THE ISAF MISSION ENDS?

The withdrawal of ISAF troops by the end of 2014 will not mean the end of NATO's engagement in Afghanistan. At NATO's Chicago Summit in 2012, Allied leaders decided on a new NATO-led mission after 2014, which will focus on training, advising and assisting Afghan forces. Allies and partners reinforced this decision with a commitment to support the long-term financial sustainability of the Afghan national security forces as part of a broader international effort.

Wider cooperation between NATO and Afghanistan will also continue under the Enduring Partnership – an agreement signed at NATO's Lisbon Summit in 2010.

Cooperation within the framework of the Enduring Partnership currently includes:

- capacity building efforts, such as professional military education programmes;
- courses to promote the fight against corruption and good governance initiatives;
- assisting the Afghan civil aviation sector in meeting international standards;
- training in civil emergency planning and disaster preparedness;
- public diplomacy efforts to promote a better understanding of NATO and its role in Afghanistan.

Over time, the Enduring Partnership will evolve to reflect the changing nature of NATO's mission and its relationship with Afghanistan.



Courtesy UN

What about

PAKISTAN AND OTHER PARTNER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION?

Countries in the region, particularly Pakistan, have important roles in ensuring enduring peace, stability and security in Afghanistan. They share a common interest in reducing the threat of extremism, promoting regional security, and addressing the problem of drug trafficking. NATO shares the same interests and concerns.

Clearly, security issues in Pakistan and Afghanistan are closely linked and can only be addressed successfully by working together. Strengthened cooperation with Pakistan will help cut off insurgent access to weapons, financing and safe havens. NATO recognizes the sacrifice that Pakistani soldiers have made in the fight against terrorism and encourages Pakistan to stay the course.

NATO continues to work with the Pakistani authorities, whose support for the efforts of the Alliance and the international community in Afghanistan remains crucial to the success of the NATO mission. One of the main NATO supply routes into and out of Afghanistan passes south through Pakistan.

NATO's Central Asian partners – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – have all provided some form of support to ISAF, including over-flight rights and the leasing of military bases to individual Allies. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (along with Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine) have provided rail networks through which non-lethal supplies can be transported to and from Afghanistan along a northern route.



A peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan will strengthen development in the region, and help progress in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and crime.

Important progress has been made both in terms of security and development, but the task is not yet complete. In particular, the Afghan government needs to pursue its commitments to improve rule of law and good governance, including fighting corruption and promoting human rights.

Progress across the board is essential to ensure self-sustaining security and stability in Afghanistan. If there is no security then economic development will not last. Equally, if there is no prosperity, security will not be sustainable. And both security and development will be difficult, if not impossible, without good governance.

NATO and the international community remain committed to supporting Afghanistan in the long term to secure a better future for the Afghan people.

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Afghanistan will one day stand on its own, but it will not be standing alone

NATO SECRETARY GENERAL
ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN

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(and many other) NATO-related subjects can be found
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