

Afghanistan

On 20 December 2005, the first freely elected Afghan parliament in over three decades was sworn in, marking the end of the Bonn process. In the light of an election that had progressed relatively smoothly, there was cautious optimism about the future of Afghanistan. Nine months later the mood had changed. Civilian and military casualties had soared, suicide bombings were occurring regularly, and citizens and leaders publicly questioned the ability of the central government to exert control over the provinces. Against this backdrop, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), led by NATO, was in the process of taking command over the majority of coalition forces in Afghanistan, and the remaining provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs). ISAF was engaged in combat in the south against an increasingly strong insurgency. Meanwhile, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) became co-chair of the board of a new five-year governance and development “compact,” designed to help the government project authority throughout the country.

Background

In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, a US-led coalition launched a military campaign against Al-Qaida and drove the Taliban from power in Afghanistan. This led to the Bonn process, which laid out a two-year roadmap for development of a constitution and national elections. The final benchmark was achieved on 18 September 2005 with the election of the Wolesi Jirga (lower House) and the provincial councils, who later selected members of the Meshrano Jirga (upper House).

The Bonn agreement included a request for the Security Council to deploy a multinational force to assist with security. Security Council Resolution 1386, of 20 December 2001, authorized ISAF to operate in and around Kabul, under United Kingdom command. ISAF was originally deployed with a different command structure and mandate than the US-led coalition, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which continued to conduct military operations against Al-Qaida.

On 28 March 2002, to lead international civilian activities, the Security Council, through Resolution 1401, authorized the creation of UNAMA under the leadership of Lakhdar Brahimi. UNAMA was mandated broadly to monitor the benchmarks of the Bonn process and to assist the Afghan government in reaching those objectives.

ISAF: Mandate and Functions

The structure of ISAF evolved considerably between 2002 and 2005. At deployment in 2002, operating under the limited mandate for security in Kabul, the UK was in command of a 5,000-strong force for six months. This was followed by Turkey for a further six months, after which Germany and the Netherlands were scheduled to take over joint command in January 2003. Prior to assuming command, the Germans and the Dutch made a formal request to NATO for support in command and control, which was approved on 17 October 2002.

In April 2003, a few months before the German/Dutch command was scheduled to hand over, Germany approached the NATO

Military Council and requested a feasibility study on whether ISAF could operate under NATO control in order to avoid the disruptions of handover and searches for lead nations. On 16 April 2003, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) agreed to assume complete command and control, which occurred formally on 11 August 2003.

In September 2003, in response to numerous requests from Afghan president Hamid Karzai and UNAMA, ISAF concluded that it lacked critical military capacity for expansion. Despite these shortages, and internal resistance from some alliance members, the Security Council passed Resolution 1510, on 13 October 2003, providing the mandate to expand. The process of expansion lurched forward unevenly; in early 2004, ISAF assumed command of the PRT in Qunduz, and laid out a plan for a gradual four-phase expansion, through the north and west (phases 1 and 2, scheduled for 2005), the south (phase 3, 2006), and partially in the east (phase 4, 2007). In October 2005 the NAC took the controversial decision to expand ISAF to the volatile south, and assumed command of the majority of forces in Afghanistan ahead of schedule in 2006.

ISAF has grown progressively over the years, from the original 5,000 deployed in 2002 to a force of more than 32,000 today, including approximately 12,600 US troops absorbed in September 2006. The operation is structured with distinct yet cooperative units. ISAF headquarters, in Kabul, provides direction and planning to all units and acts as the focal point for liaison with the UN, the Afghan government, and other relevant parties. Five regional commands cover ISAF: north, west, south, east, and capital. Each regional command also has responsibility for its PRTs, which operate within a quasi-independent structure, commanded by a lead NATO nation. There are currently twenty-five PRTs, all of which are under NATO command. In addition, the Air Task Force plans and conducts ISAF air operations, and forward bases provide logistical, medical, and security support to PRTs in each region. Since January 2004, NATO has



Map No. 4255.5 Rev. 1 UNITED NATIONS September 2006 Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Section

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

- Authorization date 20 December 2001 (UNSC Res. 1386)
- Start date December 2001
- Head of mission General David J. Richards (United Kingdom)
- Budget \$102.4 million (October 2005–September 2006)
- Strength as of October 2006 Troops: 32,600

For detailed mission information see p. 381.

had a senior civilian representative based in Kabul to advise the government and serve as correspondent for the NAC.

The PRTs have evolved to become ISAF’s main force element throughout Afghanistan. They are designed and staffed to provide civil and military support to provincial governments, to promote a secure and safe environment, and to work closely with UNAMA and the international community. These objectives are accomplished through a mix of patrolling, monitoring, and mediation that vary by location, depending on the country providing the

PRT. Throughout most of the year, many states retained significant caveats on their troops, restricting the types of missions they could undertake and where. At the NATO summit in late November, most of the caveats were removed, although large contributors like Germany and Italy continued to avoid combat missions in the south.

The core mandate of ISAF has remained consistent in its focus on security and stability. The Commander's Intent has incorporated a broad reading of this mandate, stating that ISAF "seeks to reinforce the people of Afghanistan's belief that long-term peace and growing economic prosperity . . . is possible."¹ ISAF works to resolve conflict, reduce tension, defeat the residual insurgency, and support and train the Afghan national security forces. Although the scope of ISAF operations has expanded with its assumption of responsibility for security across Afghanistan, in principle the mandate will remain distinct from the remnants of OEF, which continue to conduct "kinetic" operations.

Innovatively, ISAF also identified three key areas of work under the theme of assistance to secure economic growth: securing mineral resources, border crossing points, the transport network, water and power supply; supporting the government of Afghanistan in its counternarcotics campaign; and assisting the government in executing its development strategy.

ISAF: Key Developments and Challenges

Mission Expansion, NATO Takeover

The peace operations in Afghanistan have been *sui generis*. That ISAF's mandate places it in a position of assistance and support to the government of Afghanistan was in clear contrast with coalition forces that conduct "full-spectrum operations . . . to defeat Al Qaeda and associated movements, establish an enduring Afghan security structure and reshape its posture for the Long War."²

The year 2006 ushered in significant change in the role and operational footing of ISAF. As noted, in December 2005, NATO

agreed to deploy ISAF forces to the south and the east, executing the third phase of its plan for expansion. NATO formally assumed responsibility for those areas on 31 July 2006, increasing ISAF's mission staffing requirement to 15,000 personnel.

In September 2006, NATO commanders took the unusual step of publicly calling for an additional deployment of 2,000 troops, improved air support, and more equipment in the face of rising violence. Initial responses were negative, but intense diplomacy at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in New York led to contributions from Poland, Romania, Britain, and Canada, reaching the 2,000 mark. Germany, Italy, and Spain, which all have large contingents in the more secure north and west, have declined both to redeploy to the south or the east, and to add further troops in these areas.

On 28 September 2006, NATO further announced that it would take command over 12,000 US forces in eastern Afghanistan, bringing the total number of troops under NATO command to over 32,000. This process marked the completion of the fourth phase of the NATO expansion. As the year drew to a close, approximately 10,000 soldiers—primarily within special operations in the east, and involved in training the Afghan National Army (ANA)—remained under US command.

Security and the Upsurge in Violence

There was a significant upswing in insurgent activity in Afghanistan. The frequency of suicide bombings also rose, with more than sixty attacks in 2006, up from seven in 2005. Meanwhile, ISAF units deployed to the south were engaged in serious combat against a determined opposition, confirming the fears of NATO allies that were reluctant to expand the mission to the south and east. Fatality figures among military forces were rising; the injury totals for the first nine months of the year already exceeded those for 2005.

Civilian casualties and the social cost of conflict as a result of insurgent attacks and military responses remained a concern. For example, NATO's operation in Panjwaii district, known as Operation Medusa, caused an

estimated 500–1,500 “Taliban fatalities”; local reports suggested that there were civilian casualties, and government figures counted at least 2,500 displaced families. Operation Medusa was launched only a few months after President Karzai stated at a press conference, speaking on the subject of Afghan casualties, that “the international community [must] reassess the manner in which this war against terror is conducted.” A task for security actors into 2007 and beyond will be to assess at what level the costs of aggressive counterinsurgency operations are acceptable when those costs are borne by already disgruntled civilians. The operation in Panjwaii was hailed as a military success by NATO commanders, who noted that they were able to reopen a key highway and establish a permanent presence. However, it did not appear to have diminished the vigor of the insurgency.

Insurgent activity extended beyond targeting ISAF and coalition forces. On 10 September 2006, a suicide bomber assassinated Hakim Taniwal, the governor of Paktia province; this was followed by a second suicide bomber at his funeral the next day. Frequent storming of towns that lack a government presence demonstrated the freedom of the insurgency

movement to operate, as happened in Mian Nishin on 18 June, and in Garmsir on 11 September. The coalition-led response to such incidents was swift, and towns were quickly recaptured. Based on the frequency of such events, it seemed that these insurgent attacks were demonstrations of strength rather than attempts to secure territory.

In conjunction with this rise in violence, the level of resentment against the international intervention soared. The crash of a US military vehicle on 29 May sparked riots where, for the first time in public, members of the group that had led the resistance to the Taliban—Panjshiris—were arrayed against President Karzai, NATO, and the coalition. Expert testimony before the US House of Representatives in September quoted civilians as saying: “The people have totally lost trust in the government,” and “the people have no hope for this government now.”³

The ANA has performed well, especially during the 2005 elections. It consequently came under increasing direct attack by insurgents, particularly in areas where it had conducted joint operations with OEF forces. The remainder of 2006, and early 2007, will test the effectiveness and resiliency of ANA forces, which now number approximately 26,900 troops. Reform of the police sector progressed less well in 2006, with Secretary-General Annan acknowledging that the Afghan police had limited ability beyond Kabul, and lacked leadership, equipment, and facilities—a situation compounded by the absence of a functioning judicial and penal system. There does not appear to be a consistent strategy for training police at the provincial level, with individual PRTs providing uncoordinated assistance.

Table 3.2.1 Military Fatalities in Afghanistan, 2005–2006

	2005	2006	Percentage Increase
January	2	1	50
February	2	17	850
March	6	13	217
April	19	5	26
May	4	17	425
June	29	22	76
July	2	19	950
August	33	29	88
September	12	37	308
October	10	17	17
November	7	9	12
December	4	4	10
Total	130	191	147

Source: <http://www.icasualties.org/oef>.

UNAMA: Mandate and Functions

UNAMA was initially mandated to assist Afghans to create political legitimacy through democratization, maintain peace and stability by negotiating disputes, monitor and report on human rights, advise on institution building, and assist in aid coordination. The mission was divided into two pillars. The first pillar,

UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

- Authorization and start date 28 March 2002 (UNSC Res. 1401)
- SRSG Tom Koenigs (Germany)
- Senior military adviser Brigadier Philip Jones (United Kingdom)
- Senior police adviser Roberto Bernal (Philippines)
- Budget \$68.4 million (1 January–31 December 2006)
- Strength as of 30 September 2006
 - Military advisers/liaison officers: 11
 - Police advisers: 3
 - International civilian staff: 191
 - Local civilian staff: 769
 - UN volunteers: 30

For detailed mission information see p. 243.

“RRR,” remained focused on relief, recovery, and reconstruction, while the second, “Political Affairs,” had responsibility for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and elections, and later expanded its activities to include verification of political and human rights. In addition, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) has special advisers on human rights, gender, drugs, rule of law, police, military, demobilization, and legal issues.

UNAMA successfully discharged its initial responsibility to shepherd through the commitments made in Bonn. Two Loya Jirgas were convened peacefully, and both presidential and parliamentary elections were accomplished with fewer incidents than expected. UNAMA’s role in economic governance has also been important, both through work at the provincial level, and through convening the Afghan Development Forum, as well as arranging the January 2006 London Conference on Afghanistan.

UNAMA: Key Developments and Challenges

Development and Governance

The January 2006 London Conference led to the Afghanistan Compact, a five-year agenda

for security, governance, rule of law, human rights, counternarcotics, and economic and social development. The compact is a departure from previous development frameworks. It established an action plan, and measurable, time-bound political and developmental benchmarks. Participating countries and organizations pledged a total of \$10.5 billion to Afghanistan over a five-year period.

The compact seeks to establish a joint coordination and monitoring board, to be co-chaired by the government of Afghanistan and UNAMA, which will form an important part of the responsibilities of UNAMA. In conjunction with its mandate to help build legitimate government institutions and promote political stability, and to provide targeted technical assistance to the security sector, gender, counternarcotics, and human rights monitoring, this new function will require an effective mission. The UN responded to these challenges with innovative steps, such as the recruitment of governance officers within UNAMA—a move that recognizes the need to play an active state-building role in Afghanistan. UNAMA also continues to support the Disarming Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) process, and assists the parliament and numerous coordinating bodies. However, it has moved away from deliverables, and toward a monitoring and support role.

The year 2006 also saw continued economic recovery. In addition to positive macroeconomic fundamentals, the completion of key infrastructure projects—such as the road from Jalalabad to Torkham—is helping to facilitate economic growth and the revenue capabilities of the Afghan government. President Karzai’s christening of a new Coca-Cola bottling plant on 10 September provided a widely publicized example of the potential for international investment in Afghanistan.

Optimism on this front, however, has been tempered by the rapid growth in the narco-economy. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime predicts that this year’s poppy harvest will break all previous records, reaching 6,100 tons, or 92 percent of world supply, and

exceeding global consumption by 30 percent, potentially allowing drug barons to stockpile and thereby weather and profit from any successful eradication programs.⁴ There are signs that some of the economic growth is driven by the lucrative profits of the drug trade, impeding the establishment of law and order. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the government continues to lack the institutions and service-delivery capacity necessary to project power into the provinces and thereby secure the allegiance of its citizens away from warlords and drug barons.



(Corbis/Syed Jan Sabawoon)

An Italian ISAF soldier distributes notebooks and pens to Afghan students in a Kabul school, 19 October 2006.

Conclusion

As the year 2006 drew to a close, it remained to be seen whether NATO's assumption of command would be enough to counteract the challenge of the Taliban. Statements of long-term commitment from leaders in Canada and the UK may be tested by significant casualties. The effect of the upsurge in violence on reconstruction activities had not yet played out: it was unclear whether economic gains made between 2002 and 2005 would be reversed, and whether infrastructural improvements would be damaged or lost. In late 2006, there was increasing concern over Taliban movement between Afghanistan and

Pakistan, and the location of its command structures beyond the reach of ISAF and the Afghan government.

Meanwhile, there is a healthy appetite for peace in Afghanistan, though tempered with frustration and disenchantment. The challenge is not only to provide security to Afghans, but also to ensure that the fragile institutions of government can create a governance relationship with citizens to strengthen the legitimacy of the state. A serious, multiyear commitment to this goal by international agencies and security actors would offer room for hope.

Notes

1. ISAF, "Commander's Statement of Intent— ISAF IX," <http://www.jcfbs.nato.int/isaf>.
2. See <http://www.cfc-a.centcom.mil/information/coalition%20forces%20in%20afghanistan.htm>.
3. Barnett R. Rubin, "Still Ours to Lose: Afghanistan on the Brink," written testimony to the House Committee on International Relations, Washington, D.C., 21 September 2006, p. 2.
4. "Afghanistan Opium Survey, 2006," <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/execsummaryafg.pdf>.