

NATO

Topic A: War in Afghanistan

Director: David Gong



VMUN 2010

Background

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States government demanded the Taliban Government's hand-over of Osama Bin Laden, whom President George W. Bush considered to be the prime suspect of the attacks. When the negotiations failed, the CIA, the US Army and the British Forces teamed up with the Northern Alliance (an Anti-Taliban organization) to overthrow the Taliban regime. Bombings and ground attacks commenced on October 7th, 2001 and by the end of November of that year, Taliban fighters lost control over Kabul, and fled to the mountains.

After a brief period of inactivity, the Taliban slowly regained morale and conducted guerilla warfare against the coalition troops. IEDs (Improvised Explosive Device) soon replaced gunfights and suicide bombers as the primary tool for insurgents. The Taliban fighters hid in caves in the mountains across Afghanistan, most notably along the Afghan-Pakistani border. The size of the country and the lack of troops make reconstruction efforts very difficult. Areas cleared out by coalition troops are quickly regained by insurgents; there are simply not enough troops to hold on to every area.

Up until 2006, most of the operations were headed by American and British troops as a part of "Operation Enduring Freedom." Starting from January 2006, however, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) started to replace American troops in southern Afghanistan. The command of international troops in southern Afghanistan was handed to British General Sir David J. Richards, while

regional command was led by Canadian General David Fraser. Initially, the ISAF consisted of 3300 British troops, 2500 Canadian troops, 1963 Dutch troops, 280 Danish troops, 240 Australian troops, and 150 Estonian troops.

When the ISAF initially took over operations, one of NATO's main goals was to weed out Taliban fighters from local villages and mountains. The year 2006 saw some of the worst fighting since the war started, with daily gunfights and IED attacks against NATO troops. In response, the Canadian Forces launched Operation Medusa, where NATO troops attempted to establish governmental control over the province of Kandahar (at the time, Kandahar was believed to be a Taliban stronghold). Shortly after Operation Medusa came Operation Mountain Fury, which was a major NATO operation to clear out Taliban fighters from eastern Afghanistan.

Along with removing Taliban fighters, another goal of this operation was reconstructing schools and healthcare facilities in war-battered provinces. In 2006, NATO achieved numerous tactical victories against the Taliban; Taliban supply routes were cut off and areas that were once havens to the Taliban have been blocked off. Nonetheless, the Taliban had not been completely defeated and the fight went on. According to the Royal Statistics Society, in NATO's first year in charge of southern Afghanistan, around five coalition troops were killed every week.

Current Situation

The new American president Barack Obama pledged to increase the number

of troops in Afghanistan. New troops are desperately needed to maintain order within Afghanistan and along the Afghan-Pakistani border. Obama has pledged to send in more troops from the US and relocate troops who are currently in Iraq. In January 2009, around 3,000 new American troops were deployed to Afghanistan. In February, it was announced that 17,000 new troops would be sent to Afghanistan.

The ISAF continues to provide security and humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. In addition, the ISAF has been training the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, in hopes that the Afghan soldiers will reach NATO standards and become self-sufficient. NATO's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) have been working tirelessly with NGOs (non-governmental organization) and IGOs (intergovernmental organization) to rebuild towns and other infrastructure in war torn regions. On top of reconstruction and security, NATO troops have been trying to curb the illegal drug trade that thrives in Afghanistan.

Domestic polls in NATO member countries show that the people of the majority of the nations want to withdraw from Afghanistan. Canada, for instance, has pledged to pull its troops out by 2011. Countries like South Korea (a non-NATO nation) has already withdrawn all of its combat troops. Whether to remain or to withdraw is a question for all countries that are part of the NATO-led operations. If they withdraw, how will they do so and what are the consequences? If they remain, how will they maintain stability? These are just a few of the many questions the NATO committee will have to answer during committee sessions.

Bloc Positions

US – Barack Obama pledges thousands of new troops to combat insurgents in Afghanistan and along the Afghani-Pakistani border. Some senators & generals see a possibility for permanent American bases in the country

China – The Foreign Ministry confirmed in November 2008 that China would not send combat troops to Afghanistan. China currently only supplies humanitarian aid

UK – British Forces have ended combat mission in Iraq. Gordon Brown has, like Barack Obama, pledged more troops for Afghanistan.

Russia – The Russian government allows NATO to transport equipments/aid on Russia grounds. Otherwise, there are no Russian combat troops in Afghanistan.

Australia – On August 4th, 2009 Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd pledged no pullout from Afghanistan.

Canada – Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper promises to pull out majority of Canadian troops by 2011.

Questions

1) Should NATO withdraw personnel from Afghanistan? Why or why not?

- 2) Is there anyway for NATO to speed up the reconstruction process?
- 3) How can NATO personnel gain the trust of the local population?
- 4) How can NATO stop insurgents from re-taking towns & cities that coalition troops clear out?
- 5) What are some ways to combat the current problem of IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices)?
- 6) The three countries that provide the most number of troops are the US, UK, and Canada. Should NATO demand every other member nation to increase contribution towards operations in Afghanistan?

Sources

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle08.asp?xfile=data/international/2009/August/international_August205.xml§ion=international

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_8189.htm

<http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2009/afghanistan.war/index.html>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/7456551.stm

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/opposition-mounts-against-afghan-war-20080929-4qew.html>

<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iDAIDVoYEB9h6trv1wYV55GKVVSA>