

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Chairman Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on
NATO: From Common Defense to Common Security
February 7, 2006

Today the Foreign Relations Committee meets to discuss the evolution of the NATO alliance and its operations in Afghanistan. We are honored to welcome our good friend, General James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, to share with us his insights on NATO's transformation and its role in Afghanistan and other regions outside the alliance's borders.

General Jones has brought energy and imagination to non-traditional operations outside of Europe. In August, I had the pleasure of joining General Jones in North Africa on a humanitarian mission to facilitate the release of the last 404 Moroccan prisoners of war held by the Polisario. The release of these prisoners involved U.S. mediation between Morocco and Algeria, two Muslim nations with whom we are seeking closer ties. General Jones's military-to-military contacts with these nations and the logistics support he was able to deliver through the European Command were essential to the success of this humanitarian mission. The ease with which he and his personnel worked with the Moroccans and Algerians demonstrated how successful they have been in building ties to militaries outside of Europe.

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 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.

In particular, NATO must engage with nations on its perimeter to promote security and stability. Many Nations in North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia have suffered from instability and conflict generated by demographics, religious extremism, autocratic governments, and stagnant economic systems. I applaud NATO's Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which seek to create partnerships with selected countries across Eurasia, the Middle East and Africa. These initiatives enhance our security and stability through new regional engagement on common security issues, including military-to-military cooperation. NATO has been a valuable instrument for helping nations reform and professionalize their militaries. It also has participated in many humanitarian missions, including its recent three-month effort in Pakistan following the devastating October earthquake.

Geographic distance should not dissuade NATO leaders from developing stronger links with nations willing to cooperate with NATO missions and activities. Australia and New Zealand already support the NATO operation in Afghanistan, and Japan and South Korea have expressed their interest in closer links to NATO.

In coming months, special attention must be paid to NATO's support for the African Union and its peacekeeping mission in Darfur. The African Union's efforts to respond to the genocidal violence in Sudan have been augmented by NATO's assistance with transportation, communications and other logistical requirements. Because of continuing violence in Sudan, last week the U.N. Security Council asked the Secretary General to begin planning for a U.N. peacekeeping force in Darfur. Such a

mission would reinforce and eventually absorb the African Union contingent. The proposed U.N. force is likely to require expanded NATO logistics support.

In 2002, the Bush Administration proposed the Prague Capabilities Commitment and the NATO Response Force (NRF). These initiatives were designed to facilitate the creation of an agile, flexible, and expeditionary military capability that can respond to security challenges beyond the borders of Europe. While progress has been made, some members have fallen behind in meeting these commitments. This must change if NATO is to be fully effective.

NATO's effort to stabilize Afghanistan exemplifies the challenges facing the alliance in its transition to a global mission responsive to its common security. We have witnessed a steady political transition in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The Afghans held successful Parliamentary and Provincial elections last fall. The international community displayed strong support for Afghanistan at the London Donor's Conference last week, and the newly concluded Afghanistan Compact is a credible plan for strengthening the security, economy and governance of the nation.

Despite the progress and renewed commitments, severe threats to Afghanistan's future remain, especially from terrorism, religious extremism and the narcotics trade. Overcoming these challenges will require a sustained international commitment, of which NATO is the most important component.

While Operation Enduring Freedom continues to prosecute the war on terror in Afghanistan, NATO is poised to take on a more robust security and reconstruction role. The decision by the Netherlands last week to commit up to 1,700 troops to the NATO-led reconstruction mission in southern Iraq was an important affirmation of the importance of this mission. These expanded NATO operations, first in southern Afghanistan and then in eastern Afghanistan, will be a test of NATO's capacity to defend its security "in depth," far from Europe's borders.

Afghanistan presents a difficult environment, but NATO must be resourceful, resilient and ultimately successful. Failure would be a disaster for global security. As NATO's Secretary General commented last week, "If we fail, the consequences of terrorism will land on our doorstep, be it in Belgium, Amsterdam, the United States or whatever."

We look forward to our discussions with General Jones, and we thank him for his willingness to join us today.

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