



Security Council

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Letter dated 1 February 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 23 January 2008, which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Ban Ki-moon**



Annex

**Letter dated 23 January 2008 from the Secretary-General of the
North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from August to November 2007. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(Signed) Japp de Hoop Scheffer

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. By resolution 1510 (2003) the Security Council requested the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide reports on the implementation of its mandate. This is the fifteenth such report by NATO and it covers the period from August to November 2007.
2. As at 28 October 2007, ISAF had 35,523 personnel from 26 NATO countries and 1,806 from 13 non-NATO countries.

Overall assessment

3. Throughout the reporting period, ISAF has continued to assist the Government of Afghanistan in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001), 1510 (2003) and 1776 (2007). From 1 August to 31 October 2007 ISAF suffered 356 casualties in total: 39 killed in action, 283 wounded in action, 4 non-battle deaths and 30 non-battle injuries.
4. *Military Operations:* Countrywide military operations involving ISAF and the increasingly competent Afghan National Security Forces continued. While the capacity and capability of the security forces are still not sufficient for them to conduct fully independent operations, ISAF continued to support them as they increased their numbers and capabilities. In some cases, the Afghan National Army has taken a lead role for specific operations.
5. *Outlook:* ISAF will continue to engage in a continuum of operations through the winter months into 2008. Having been planned and coordinated in cooperation with the Government and the Afghan National Security Forces, these operations will continue to assist in establishing an improved security situation, and support better governance, thus facilitating further reconstruction. ISAF will seek to prevent a possible resurgence of violence following the end of the winter period, and encourage the authority of the Government to further take hold nationwide.

Security situation

6. Opposing militant forces^a have continued their attempts to disrupt, frustrate and destroy the process of establishing peace and security in Afghanistan. Opposing militant force activity throughout Afghanistan follows already established patterns, and overall support for the opposing militant forces is proportional to the lack of Government and ISAF security presence and levels of sustained influence, in particular in Pashtun areas. Reported activity continues to be highest in the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, where the Afghan National Security Forces and ISAF continue to increase their operational presence. Owing to increased losses and tactical setbacks, the opposing militant forces focused on asymmetric tactics during

^a In the present document, the term “opposing militant forces” refers to any of the four primary groups: the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, the Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin, and Al-Qaida and affiliated groups.

the reporting period with an increased use of kidnappings, hostage takings and suicide attacks in an effort to intimidate the population and undermine the Government's ability to govern the country. Improvised explosive devices remain the preferred asymmetric weapon. In many incidents, the opposing militant forces have increased the risks to the civilian population by hiding among them, operating from civilian dwellings and using civilians as human shields. During the reporting period security situations in the regional commands were as follows:

(a) *Regional Command Capital*: The situation was assessed as tense but stable, notwithstanding that planned attacks against selected high-profile targets are expected to continue, particularly in Kabul.

(b) *Regional Command North*: The security situation was relatively calm but with pockets of instability, with increased suicide and improvised explosive device attacks, most notably in Kunduz, Meymanah and Baghlan early in November. However, the main cause for instability continues to be opposition to the authority of the Government by regional powerbrokers and criminal elements.

(c) *Regional Command West*: The security situation remains relatively calm but fragile. The opposing militant forces have continued to exploit the limited footprint of ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces to expand their influence. Attacks along the ring road continued in an effort to disrupt ISAF and Government lines of communication and maintain freedom of movement for the opposing militant forces.

(d) *Regional Command South*: Regional Command South continued to see high levels of activity on the part of the opposing militant forces, which continued to undertake low-scale conventional operations as well as increased asymmetric attacks throughout Regional Command South in an attempt to increase their credibility and create shadow governments. Their activities were also focused on disrupting ISAF and Security Force movements along Highway 1.

(e) *Regional Command East*: Opposing militant force operations continued at high levels during the reporting period, benefiting from suitable grounds in Pakistan and from their illegal movement from Pakistan to the eastern provinces of Afghanistan. Meanwhile Pakistan armed forces have increased their operations in Pakistani border regions. This, coupled with the onset of winter, has contributed to a downward trend in cross-border movements of the opposing militant forces. By early December 2007, these cross-border movements reached their lowest levels since March 2006. Opposing militant force tactics continued to include small-scale conventional attacks on ISAF and/or Security Force border positions and lines of communications as well as attacks on soft targets, including Government officials, non-governmental organizations and reconstruction and development contractors.

Counter-narcotics

7. The link between the illicit narcotics industry and insurgency has been apparent over this reporting period, further fuelling instability and the corruption that threatens all levels of governance including police authority and the wider rule of law. Ultimately this also prevents meaningful reconstruction and development.

8. The existing counter-narcotics policy must be underpinned by a joint coherent underlying delivery mechanism involving the international community and driven by the Afghan Government across the eight pillars of its National Drug Control

Strategy. A piecemeal approach will result only in limited short-term counter-narcotics progress.

9. Within its mandate, resources and operational plan, ISAF continues to fully support the implementation of the Government's counter-narcotics strategy.

Afghan National Army

10. The development of the Afghan National Army into a capable and competent fighting force continues, even in the midst of considerable rebuilding and organization. Marked improvements in the ability to plan operations, and significant gains in the ability to undertake operations are evidence of steady and positive growth of the army:

(a) *Capability*. Afghan National Army combat units continue to improve, over half being considered capable of performing counter-insurgency operations with external support. Collective combat skills also continue to improve. However, work still remains to be done in the training of headquarters and support units in order for the army to eventually achieve a true independent capability.

(b) *Manning*. The current army strength is approximately 38,500, with approximately 21,000 available for operations as from 31 October 2007.^b

(c) *Equipment*. The overall equipment situation is improving, but there are still significant shortages that need to be rectified. Although some national contributions are being made, more needs to be done to ensure that the army is fully resourced.

(d) *Training*. The pivotal role that both operational mentoring and liaison teams and the United States embedded training teams play in the development of the Afghan National Army cannot be overstated. Therefore, generating operational mentoring and liaison teams in sufficient numbers as the army grows remains a matter of priority for NATO.

Afghan National Police

11. The Afghan National Police still falls behind the desired level of capability. Coordination among international bodies involved in police development through the International Police Coordination Board, as well as training and equipping of the Afghan National Police, is critically important to extending the authority and reach of the Government. Underdevelopment in this area results in greater reliance on ISAF forces whereas the Afghan National Army and Police should hold the ground cleared by ISAF forces and offer the population continuity in security.

12. With a current strength of 75,500 personnel, the Afghan National Police requires more police mentor teams, which — as with operational mentoring and liaison teams for the Afghan National Army — are essential elements in achieving success. NATO welcomes the focused district development programme which the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan has developed. Commencing on 1 November 2007, the programme aims at enhancing police capabilities,

^b These figures reflect solely the manning of the five Afghan National Army corps. Ministry of Defence, General Staff, intermediate commands and sustaining institutions personnel are not counted here, neither are the Air Corps and the Commando kandaks counted in the original 70,000 personnel target. The final authorized number of all five corps in 2008 would be 50,274.

transforming the Afghan Uniformed Police into a service loyal to the Afghan people and Afghan national interests, building a “prosecutor-driven justice system”, strengthening the Afghan Uniformed Police linkage to provincial, regional and national leaders and staff, and developing Afghan Ministry of the Interior capabilities by mentoring its leadership.

13. Against the background of the existing substantial United States efforts and the bilateral efforts conducted through the ISAF provincial reconstruction teams, NATO has also welcomed the decision of the European Union to launch a European Police Mission (EUPOL) — which will be fully deployed by March 2008 with its 160 mentors and trainers to help further develop much-needed Afghan National Police capacity.

Neighbouring countries

14. The political situation in Pakistan was volatile during the reporting period. The political instability does nothing to assist in the provision of a more enduring and stable security environment in the region. Mass returns of Afghan refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, due to the closure of refugee camps, might cause complications for the ISAF mission.

15. NATO welcomed the Turkish initiative, following the Ankara Declaration, to further encourage the development of trilateral relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan, including the establishment of the Istanbul Forum which will constitute a multiplier for the relations in terms of economic gains. The first meeting was held in Istanbul, and the second is scheduled for Islamabad in January 2008.

16. The continuing lack of control over the Afghanistan/Pakistan border areas is a major obstacle to achieving overall security and stability in Afghanistan. The next Tripartite Commission^c will focus in more detail on the synchronization of operations in response to opposing militant force activity in the border region.

Programme Takhim-e-Sol

17. The programme Takhim-e-Sol remains ongoing, although there were no Commission meetings during the month of October because of Ramadan and the unavailability of the Commission President. As at 1 October 2007, 4,599 have reconciled via the programme. ISAF remains committed to supporting the programme within means available.

18. President Karzai made reconciliation calls to the opposing militant forces, offering non-conditional talks. While hard-line opposing militant forces continued to demand the departure of the United Nations-mandated international forces from Afghanistan as a precondition, there were indications that others were considering whether to accept the notion that a military solution alone cannot be reached and would therefore be willing to increase their dialogue with the Government. It remains as yet unclear who among the opposing militant forces might be convinced,

^c The Tripartite Commission is a military forum to discuss matters of common concern to the three parties (Afghanistan, Pakistan and ISAF, each at four-star level). The Tripartite Commission was established initially under operation “Enduring freedom”, and since October 2006 has been under ISAF auspices. With the aim of improving security along the Afghan-Pakistan border, the Commission normally meets every three to four months; however, the last meeting was held late in May 2007.

or under what conditions they would be willing to commence meaningful reconciliation. However, it is essential that any reconciliation efforts must not permit power-sharing or carving out of “protected areas”. Any former Taliban members must recognize the Constitution and the authority of the democratically elected Government, refrain from criminal activity and have no association with Al-Qaida.

Judicial reform and rule of law

19. ISAF estimates that across Afghanistan, widespread corruption combined with a general lack of awareness and understanding of the rule of law results in 70 per cent to 90 per cent of Afghans reverting to tribal law and sharia.

20. Under-resourced and with a limited reach, the formal State institutions of justice require a renewed, more coherent and robust restructuring effort. The establishment of an effective justice system not only requires overcoming such obstacles, it also demands a coherent vision for Afghanistan’s justice institutions. ISAF can only be partially successful in its task of assisting the Government to establish security in the country when the necessary structures to maintain the rule of law are absent.

21. The National Justice Strategy, which is currently under development, sets out a more focused and integrated strategic approach to developing the Government’s justice system. The legal adviser to the ISAF Commander is a direct participant in the International Coordination Group for Justice Reform responsible for developing the Strategy and the related National Justice Programme. ISAF planning will remain aligned with priorities for justice reform developed in the post-Rome process.

Disbandment of illegal armed groups

22. The process of disbandment of illegal armed groups has so far failed to produce tangible results. The district implementation, which aims at implementing disbandment at a more practical level by addressing those districts that can more easily be brought and held under compliance, has been introduced and this initiative is currently in its second implementation round:

(a) When combined with the first round, 52 out of a total of 398 districts in 22 provinces will have been affected by district implementation, 12 districts having already been declared compliant. To assist with the enforcement process, the Government is creating an enforcement unit. However, the Government has put additional enforced compliance operations on hold at the political level.

(b) It should also be noted that the disbandment process is less effective in those areas of Afghanistan that are struggling to cope with security and narcotics challenges, and the process is further challenged where there is a lack of sustained ISAF and/or Afghan National Security Force presence.

(c) The Government is on the verge of legislating on private security companies, to legitimize the weapons they hold under the regulatory control of the disbandment structure. The draft regulation is currently in the Ministry of Justice, which is refining its implementation details.

(d) ISAF support to the disbandment of illegal armed groups remains unchanged. While the Government still sets the pace of the programme and

establishes programme direction, ISAF representatives attend weekly joint secretariat meetings to ascertain the support and assistance required from ISAF. Such support is offered within ISAF resource availabilities.

Governance

23. The legitimacy and authority of the Government of Afghanistan has continued to be eroded by the wide experience of corruption at all levels and throughout all government institutions, including the police and the judiciary.

24. The development of fair, robust and sustainable government institutions at national and subnational levels is critical to establishing and maintaining the legitimacy and authority of the Government across the country. It is hoped that the creation of the Independent Local Directorate for Local Governance will successfully address the hitherto problematic area of subnational government. However, the complex ethnic and historical landscape, the lack of institutional and human capacity, coupled with ineffective and corrupt officials, means that the pace of governmental reform will be slow.

25. ISAF makes every effort to facilitate the efforts of those local Afghan officials known as honest and supportive of the Government to extend the writ of governance in their areas. This support is underpinned by the development and reconstruction activities of regional commands and provincial reconstruction teams, often with funding provided by ISAF troop-contributing countries.

26. ISAF headquarters has continued to work closely with the Government and with the international organizations in those ad hoc structures, including the Policy Action Group, that support and coordinate the efforts of the international community and the Government.

Development

27. Afghanistan continues on a slight upward trend with regard to macroeconomic indicators and most basic social programmes such as education and health, yet there are still numerous difficulties associated with gaining the popular support of the average Afghan citizen.

28. Provincial reconstruction teams remain a key mechanism for delivering development and extending the reach of the Government and the international community to the majority of the provinces. In order for this to be effective, security and development efforts must be aligned with the priorities of the Government and the capabilities of the international community. To this end, NATO has increased the focus on mechanisms for coherence of provincial reconstruction teams with the Government's development priorities as outlined in the Afghan National Development Strategy. The recently established Japanese funding mechanism, coupled with national funds and the Post-Operational Humanitarian Relief Fund continue to be key programmes for positively assisting the local populace and supporting the overall security situation.

29. The Afghan country stability picture continues to be an important tool for civil information management. NATO is currently testing a web-based prototype version of the Afghan country stability picture and anticipates having a system accessible to the international community on the World Wide Web within the year.

Simultaneously, ISAF is in the process of transferring the know-how and the responsibility for the database to the Government through a USAID-funded project.

Conclusion

30. The reporting period has seen improved liaison with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) including ISAF assistance to UNAMA campaign planning. Welcome as these developments are, a critical gap remains in identifying a single, suitably empowered and capable agency, or individual, to better synchronize and coordinate the pan-Afghanistan development efforts of the international community. This is essential if we are to maintain momentum with successful security operations quickly followed by effective reconstruction and development initiatives.
