

Afghanistan: The NATO Quagmire

By [Sarah Meyer](#)

Global Research, January 23, 2006
23 January 2006

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [AFGHANISTAN](#)

(This article appeared originally on www.indexresearch.blogspot.com 5 Jan 2006)

The NATO merry-go-round in Afghanistan, driven by America's announced withdrawal of 2,500 – 4,000 (of 19,500) troops in the spring of 2006, is in overdrive. The New York Times, in a [recent article](#) said that "Britain and the Netherlands will join Canada in assuming control in the south, along with a much smaller contingent of American support troops." This is incorrect.

The Dutch government is in disarray about its NATO participation in Afghanistan, and their Parliament will not be making a decision until the end of this month. Various headlines since November have read: (Pak Tribune) [Afghanistan is Netherlands' most disastrous overseas mission](#); (Sunday Times) [Afghan posting 'too dangerous' for Dutch army](#); and, from Agence France, [Netherlands Puts Off Decision on Afghanistan Deployment](#).

As for [Canadian Forces in the 21st century](#), CBC's in-depth discussion of Canada's military says there have been concerns that the "military is stretched too thin." In August, the present [Canadian troops in Afghanistan](#) prepared to move out of Camp Julian near Kabul in November to "join the bulk of the force at a new base near Khandahar." However, the [Toronto Star](#) said in December that "as British and Dutch stall, fears grow that Canadians will be left holding the fort." In the end of December, Col. Bowles said the Canadians will "assume responsibility for Kandahar." He also said that his force "is prepared to extend the offensive nature of the operation. It's clear that this is not a peacekeeping mission," he said. What, exactly, is this "offensive" plan? There are now unconfirmed [rumours](#) that 100 commandos from the elite Joint Task Force 2 are leaving for Afghanistan this month to "prepare the ground" for the 2000-member "battle" group.

In the UK, it was announced in September 05 that [Britain would send more troops to Afghanistan](#), making a total presence of 5,000 UK troops under the NATO command of Lieutenant-General Sir David Richards.

In November, Ahmed Rashid reported in [The Telegraph](#) that in Kabul, the capital, 500 – 800 British troops will have NATO 'peacekeeping' command. In Kandahar, under Canadian control, 500 – 800 UK troops will also be deployed. In Helmand, SE Afghanistan, 1000 troops will be deployed in Lashkar gar in the spring. In theory, these troops will be backed by civilian engineers and other experts and diplomats," and will fight opium trade growth and help with reconstruction. And finally, at another base in Helmand (? Camp Bastion?) a further 1000 will fight the Taleban 'insurgency.' According to [Simon Tisdale](#) Britain is 'uncertain' about support from Canada, Australia and New Zealand and there is disagreement about "operational issues and rules of engagement." In a later [Guardian article](#) Tisdale writes that the European Union is "ill prepared to take on ... responsibilities" in Afghanistan. At the end of December, Michael Evans writes in [The Times](#) that "Britain's

plans are being disrupted by political indecision within Nato.” Simon Jenkins, in an excellent overview of Britain’s role in Afghanistan in [The Guardian](#), Called the UK troop additions “the half-baked product of Tony Blair’s global machismo,” calling the precipitant disaster “Britain’s new opium war.”

[Australia](#), fearing Dutch lack of NATO commitment for logistics and protection, are in doubt about sending reconstruction teams to S. Afghanistan.

[Denmark](#) “confirmed the possibility” of an additional 190 soldiers, also to be sent to the Helmand province.

[France](#) has withdrawn her US + NATO commanded jet planes. There will be a total of 1250 French soldiers in Afghanistan. The [Kabul mission](#) will receive 450 new soldiers. There are already 200 French soldiers in the South of Afghanistan. France refuses any military duties.

[Germany](#) will expand its troops from 750 to 3,000. The [Kashar World News](#) says that 500 will remain in Kabul, whilst the rest will be based in Mazar-i-Sharif. Germany, like France, refuses military duties.

[Lithuania](#) will be leading a NATO-led PRT (Provisional Reconstruction Team), joined by Croatia and Azerbaijan.

[New Zealand](#) pulled its 50 SAS troops out of Afghanistan. 94 Army, Navy and Air Force personnel will be in Bamyan [until June 2006](#).

[Sweden](#) is to add 300 to its nearly 100 troops working on reconstruction in Mazar-i-Sharif, Northern Afghanistan, for a maximum of 2 years. There are now 11,000 ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) soldiers from 37 countries stationed in Afghanistan.”

[Uzbekistan](#) has asked both America and NATO to leave their country. This will affect Germany, who uses Termez as a “back-up base for its 2,250 troops in Afghanistan.”

To further complicate the situation, a [SEDM](#) (Southeastern European Defense Ministerial) meeting, prodded by Rumsfeld, decided that 11 countries will send a 400-member brigade to Afghanistan for 6 months.

Meanwhile, on January 3, The Washington Post headline announced: [U.S. Cedes Duties in Rebuilding Afghanistan](#). The US budget will drop from \$1b to \$600m. The Afghans will be expected to take on this task themselves (!). There are concerns amongst Afghan officials that America’s priorities are “shifting elsewhere.” Where is “elsewhere”?

A 2002 [Asia Times article](#) commented: “It should be understood that when Iranian leaders see the map of American bases tightening around us like a noose, they are absolutely sure that Washington’s primary goal is first to strangle us, then kill us off.” The present governmental and media propaganda on ‘nuclear’ Iran neglects the key factor, which is that Iran is the 4th largest producer of crude oil and the second largest natural gas producer. The US will not be pleased at the recent [announcement](#) that Iran is “nearing an accord” with Pakistan and India on a \$7bn. pipeline project. UNOCOL had planned, in its central Asian’s pipeline project, backed by Zalmay Khalilzad, to go through Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan

With shifting goalposts, 16,000 troops from various countries are still 'on hold' for Afghanistan '06. A recipe for disaster is in place.

All the participating countries have a different agenda and none share policy coordination. A "seamless transition" does not seem possible. Meanwhile, the propaganda drumbeats focused on Iran become louder.

Other references:

[Map of Gereshk, Helmand, Afghanistan](#)

[NATO in Afghanistan](#)

Ahmed Rashid, BBC, [Nato's Afghanistan Troop Dilemma](#)

[Index on Afghanistan](#)

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Sarah Meyer](#), Global Research, 2006

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Sarah Meyer](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca