

## Moscow denies NATO access to Afghanistan

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, January 24, 2009

[Russia Today](#) 23 January 2009

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Russia has yet to give NATO or the U.S permission to deliver military supplies to Afghanistan through its territory. That's according to Russia's envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Central Command Chief General Petraeus said Moscow had agreed to open a supply corridor through Russia.

In April 2008, Russia made deals with the Alliance on railway transit of non-military supplies to Afghanistan. It also made bilateral deals with France and Germany allowing air transit to Afghanistan.

Russian expert Lieutenant-General Leonid Sazhin says the U.S. needs a Russian ground transit route if it wants to reliably supply its troops in Afghanistan. Otherwise, the US may be forced to withdraw from the troubled region.

The U.S. and NATO are looking for alternative routes to transport supplies to Afghanistan after an increase in Taliban attacks from neighbouring Pakistan.

Washington has pledged to almost double its contingent in Afghanistan this year.

NATO's big failure?

By now, The U.S. operation in Afghanistan has been on for more than seven years, beginning in 2001 as a direct response to the 9/11 attacks.

Its purpose was simple: to capture Osama Bin Laden, destroy Al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban regime, which according to US Bush Doctrine, was harbouring terrorists.

The US forces swooped in - and NATO needed in on the action.

Still, analysts say that the situation for the coalition forces in the country is gradually deteriorating.

"Operational updates on the ground say that we are losing a war. The Taliban has actually increased insurgent attacks," said Malou Innocent, a Foreign Policy Analyst at the Cato Institute in Washington D.C.

Moreover, the coalition has yet to achieve its initial goals in this war.

Fact are speaking for themselves: Bin Laden still remains at large, Al-Qaeda is operating and the Taliban's control over Afghanistan is increasing.

According to recent statistics published by the International Council for Security and

Development, in 2007 the Taliban controlled 54 percent of Afghanistan. But already in 2008 that percentage grew to 72%.

"The situation has been deteriorating during recent year," said Aleksandr Pikaev, an expert from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

"It is linked to the fact that the NATO-led forces pay very little attention to peace building to provide the Afghan population with necessary means of subsistence other than growing narcotics," he said.

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