

NATO Plans 'Northern Afghanistan Offensive'

By [Global Research](#)

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BERLIN — The NATO military alliance is planning a large-scale offensive in northern Afghanistan this year against Taliban insurgents, a senior German general was quoted as saying on Thursday.

"There will definitely be an operation up there in Kunduz (province)," General Bruno Kasdorf, chief of staff in the NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, told the German ARD public radio.

He declined to give details but said that it would be on a "similar" scale to the offensive currently underway in the southern province of Helmand involving 15,000 US, NATO and Afghan troops.

"I don't want to say that it will be the same scale and size as what we are seeing now in Helmand. But definitely something similar," he said.

Operation Mushtarak is the first operation in a 12-18-month campaign for which US President Barack Obama is sending another 30,000 troops, with 10,000 from NATO, aimed at taking the fight to the Taliban.

Operations to push the Taliban out of their iconic Afghan stronghold of Kandahar are also underway, the commander of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan, US General Stanley McChrystal, said Wednesday.

Germany has around 4,300 troops in Afghanistan, the third-largest contingent after the US and Britain.

They are based mainly in the north, which has not seen the same level of violence as the south, but insurgent activity has picked up there in recent months.

German Brigadier General Frank Leidenberger said last month that Washington was sending around 2,000 troops to the north to help German soldiers there.

Amid strong popular opposition to the mission, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's government decided in January to send up to 850 more troops, but in common with Obama, she wants to start bringing soldiers home in 2011.

Berlin also announced a doubling of aid to 430 million euros (590 million dollars) over 2010-2013 and wants to step up efforts to train the Afghan army and police.

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