

Canada commits major force to fighting in southern Afghanistan

Written by

Saturday, 11 June 2005 16:32 - Last Updated Saturday, 11 June 2005 16:32

Canada commits major force to fighting in southern Afghanistan

NATO is committed to expanding its International Security Assistance Force southern Afghanistan, which has traditionally been a Taliban stronghold. "Many countries came forward with substantial pledges for expansion to the south," a senior NATO spokesman said June 9. "That includes principally Canada and the United Kingdom, who were already planning to deploy significant forces." NATO Expanding Missions in Afghanistan

By Kathleen T. Rhem
American Forces Press Service

BRUSSELS, Belgium, June 10, 2005 ? NATO is committed to expanding its International Security Assistance Force into western and southern Afghanistan, and will reinforce Afghan security forces during upcoming elections.

NATO defense ministers met here June 9-10 to discuss major operations and transforming the alliance. Four major operations have been topics of discussion: Kosovo Force, the ISAF in Afghanistan, the training mission in Iraq, and plans to extend airlift support to African Union troops in Darfur, Sudan.

Regarding Afghanistan, ISAF's expansion into the west is nearly complete, and discussions here included plans to further expand into the south of the country, which has traditionally been a Taliban stronghold.

"In Afghanistan, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, continues to extend its reach across the nation from the north, over to the west, and soon to the south," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said in a brief press conference June 9.

"Many countries came forward with substantial pledges for expansion to the south," a senior NATO spokesman said June 9. "That includes principally Canada and the United Kingdom, who were already planning to deploy significant forces."

NATO is also committed significant support to Afghanistan's parliamentary and provincial elections scheduled for this fall in much the same way, building "on its success in providing security during last year's historic presidential election," Rumsfeld said.

"It goes without saying that ministers reconfirmed that major support to the very important legislative elections," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said in a press conference.

Scheffer said NATO would support the elections with three battalions, a quick-reaction force, and an "over-the-horizon reserve." That support would be "more or less the same pattern we saw with the presidential election," he noted.

The ministers also discussed, without resolution, the problem posed by narcotics production and trafficking in Afghanistan. The NATO spokesman said narcotics reduction efforts will always

Canada commits major force to fighting in southern Afghanistan

Written by

Saturday, 11 June 2005 16:32 - Last Updated Saturday, 11 June 2005 16:32

be led by the Afghan government, but that such efforts have implications for NATO.

"We have to look at the balance of what our militaries do in terms of purely military tasks and tasks that stray into more civilian-like areas, and the importance of keeping a close eye on this," the spokesman said.

Scheffer said that even though this is not NATO's first priority in Afghanistan, it is important to support the efforts of the Afghan government.

http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2005/20050610_1682.html