



SECRETARY GENERAL
LE SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL
Anders Fogh Rasmussen

SG(2010)0069

04 February 2010

Prime Minister, dear Jan Peter,

I am aware of the decision your government took in 2007 regarding the contribution of your country to ISAF. At the time it was decided that on 1 August 2010 the Netherlands would end its responsibility as military lead nation of ISAF in Uruzgan. The subsequent redeployment of the Netherlands Task Force Uruzgan was to be completed by 1 December 2010.

Today, I am writing you to formally request the Netherlands to reconsider elements of that decision. I do so also with a view to recent developments in Afghanistan and NATO's response to these.

As you are aware, at its ministerial meeting in December and since, the NAC has agreed on a series of important decisions regarding steps we should take the next 12-18 months. These decisions were taken in response to the initiative by President Obama and the assessment of COMISAF regarding the increase of the capacity of ISAF in 2010. This increase intends to make considerable progress possible in many areas of activity, notably in training and in the build up of Afghan security forces.

The increased training should enable ISAF to start moving into a supporting role, with Afghan security forces gradually taking the lead in a number of provinces that meet conditions for transition even in 2010. This process will intensify in 2011, notwithstanding the need for a substantial NATO commitment in Afghanistan for several more years. The London Conference of 28 January, in which two Netherlands Cabinet Ministers participated, welcomed these decisions and clearly supported NATO's commitment to this envisaged process of transition. Meanwhile, I note that the vast majority of NATO members have announced substantial increases of their troop levels.

My request is connected to these decisions. It is my conviction, shared by many in the Alliance, that the Netherlands contribution in Uruzgan is first-rate and exemplary. The standard which has been achieved by your armed forces and civilian personnel in one of the most challenging parts of Afghanistan has become the benchmark for others. It is of paramount importance for the success of ISAF, for the Alliance contribution in Afghanistan and for the sustainable and successful transfer of responsibility to Afghan authorities that the Netherlands continue to contribute to ISAF in such a way and for such a period of time that the Dutch accomplishments in Uruzgan will be secured. This requires that redeployment is executed responsibly in accordance with the aim of durable transition.

In this light, I am requesting the Netherlands Government to consider to contribute to ISAF in Uruzgan a new, albeit smaller mission during the period between 1 August 2010 and 1 August 2011. This mission should focus on increased training of Afghan security forces and on responsible transition. This transition relates to the current tasks, projects and activities of your Task Force Uruzgan, notably your civilian-led PRT, to Afghan authorities and/or other ISAF partners. In addition, the Alliance will greatly appreciate the continuation during this period of your country's contribution of F-16 capabilities and staff personnel.

Being aware of some of the considerations on which your Government's 2007 decision was based, it seems right to give you certain assurances from the Alliance in order to be able to reach a positive decision on my request.

To that end I have consulted with SACEUR and COMISAF, and it is my pleasure that I can give you the following assurances:

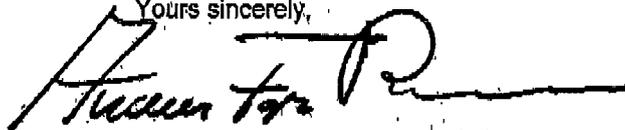
- another nation, with which the Netherlands is familiar working, will take over the lead responsibility for Uruzgan on 1 August 2010;
- NATO will establish, in close consultation with you, a concrete transition plan by 1 August 2010 with a clear timeline for implementation;
- from August 2010 until August 2011 your PRT will continue to be Dutch-civil led, while working in close cooperation with the new lead nation;
- and the redeployment of your new mission as of 1 August 2011 is assured, as it will be integrated in the operational planning of COMISAF.

Furthermore the Alliance, through its Senior Civilian Representative and others, will work with Afghan authorities on the following priorities that are directly related to the envisaged responsible transition:

- governance capacity in Uruzgan, as well as capacity in Kabul which is relevant for Uruzgan projects and policies, must be strengthened in the said period;
- while intensified training will aim to further improve capacity and capabilities of Afghan security forces units in Uruzgan, the Afghan National Army capacity and capabilities in Uruzgan will be kept at least at current levels, and Afghan National Police capacities and capabilities will be increased.

I am ready to discuss with you all elements of this request, including the suggested assurances. SACEUR, who will visit you on 8 February, is also ready to discuss any of these elements with you and your colleagues. He is familiar with my views on this matter and has my full consent and support.

Yours sincerely,



Anders Fogh Rasmussen

His Excellency
Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
The Hague