

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**FROM ASSUMPTION TO EXPANSION:  
PLANNING AND EXECUTING NATO'S FIRST YEAR  
IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL**

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## ABSTRACT

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NATO initiated its first expeditionary operation when it assumed the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. In the space of a year NATO expanded the mission twice and deployed troops to support the first successful democratic elections in the country. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE, as NATO's strategic military headquarters conducted the strategic planning, force generation and execution of this mission. Strategic planning and force generation in NATO, though technically similar to standard US Joint and US-led Coalition processes, is in reality a unique system that functions by its own set of rules. As NATO continues to assume a larger role in operations in Afghanistan and possibly Iraq, understanding how this 26 nation Alliance operates at the strategic level, through a review of its first year in Afghanistan is timely. This issue is particularly relevant in that most US officers assigned to NATO positions or to Joint and Army billets that deal with the Alliance arrive in their posts unschooled in how NATO operates, often to their resulting dismay and frustration. With this critical audience in mind, this Strategy Research Project will describe the SHAPE role within the Alliance and using NATO's first year in Afghanistan as the backdrop, discusses the key players, processes, procedures, and issues faced by those involved in planning Alliance operations at the strategic level. While recognizing SHAPE's strategic successes to date, this paper will highlight the larger issue of Alliance will, underscored by problems with force generation, as the most pressing impediment to NATO expeditionary aspirations and will assess Alliance efforts to resolve this issue as well as forward specific recommendations to enhance the expeditionary nature of the Alliance.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
FROM ASSUMPTION TO EXPANSION: PLANNING AND EXECUTING NATO'S FIRST YEAR IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL .....	1
NATO'S ISAF MISSION: AN OVERVIEW .....	1
THE NATO STRUCTURE .....	3
INSIDE SHAPE: NATO'S STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS .....	3
SAME NAME, SAME BANNER, SAME MISSION: NATO ASSUMES ISAF.....	5
OFF TO KONDUZ: EXPANSION PART ONE.....	7
STAGED NATO EXPANSION AND SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS .....	10
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	12
CONCLUSION .....	14
ENDNOTES .....	17
GLOSSARY .....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	23



## FROM ASSUMPTION TO EXPANSION: PLANNING AND EXECUTING NATO'S FIRST YEAR IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

On 11 August 2003 NATO initiated its first expeditionary operation when it assumed the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> From a standing start NATO expanded the mission twice and then deployed troops to support the first successful democratic elections in the country. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE, as NATO's strategic military headquarters conducted the strategic planning and force generation of this mission.

For the SHAPE officers who planned Alliance operations in Afghanistan, there was no Unified Command Plan to reference, no existing NATO Contingency Plans to refine, no set of assigned or apportioned forces with which to work, and no plans drafted by US European or Central Command magically appeared to become NATO plans. NATO's mission in Afghanistan, like all its post-Cold War operations, was planned by multi-national SHAPE officers based on the political guidance of the leaders of the 26 nation Alliance and resourced by troops and assets offered by those nations to the mission. Strategic planning and force generation in NATO, though technically similar to standard US Joint and US-led Coalition processes, is in reality a curious mix of deliberate and crisis planning, operating within a unique system that functions by its own set of rules.

This Strategy Research Project (SRP) will describe the SHAPE role within the Alliance and using NATO's first year in Afghanistan as the backdrop, discuss the key players, processes, procedures, and issues faced by those involved in planning Alliance operations at the strategic level. While recognizing SHAPE's strategic successes to date, this paper will highlight the larger issue of Alliance will, underscored by problems with force generation, as the most pressing impediment to NATO expeditionary aspirations and will assess Alliance efforts to resolve this issue as well as forward specific recommendations to enhance the expeditionary nature of the Alliance.

### **NATO'S ISAF MISSION: AN OVERVIEW**

ISAF was created by UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 on 20 December 2001, to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) maintain security in Kabul and its surrounding area.<sup>2</sup> The mission was initially led by the United Kingdom until June 2002, followed by Turkey until February 2003 and then by a joint German and Netherlands force until August 2003.<sup>3</sup> Hence, from its beginning, ISAF, though not a NATO operation was led and sourced by NATO nations. NATO's formal involvement with ISAF came in early 2003 in response to a

request from Germany and the Netherlands for NATO support in planning and force generation of their ISAF mission.<sup>4</sup> A logical continuation of this support led to the Alliance's formal assumption of the mission in August 2003.

Between August and November 2003, some 5600 NATO-led troops operated within the environs of Kabul providing security and support to the ATA, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and International Organizations in the area.<sup>5</sup> In December 2003, some 6,200 ISAF personnel provided essential security in support of Afghanistan's Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ) and at the end of the month the NATO mission underwent its initial expansion when ISAF assumed command of the German led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Konduz, some 400 miles northwest of Kabul.<sup>6</sup>

From January through June of 2004, despite the Alliance's stated intent to expand its mission and PRT presence in Afghanistan, ISAF's numbers remained at the 6,200 level and no additional NATO PRTs were established. Notwithstanding this, ISAF assumed a lead support role for the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Heavy Weapon Cantonment (HWC) programs in the Kabul and Konduz areas, expanded its support to US-led Afghan National Army (ANA) training and took over responsibility for Kabul International Airport (KAIA) from Germany.<sup>7</sup>

On 28 June 2004 at the Istanbul Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government announced that NATO would expand its mission in Afghanistan with an addition of four PRTs and a Forward Operating Base in the North of the country. The plan also approved the eventual expansion of NATO PRTs and responsibility for stability operations into the West of Afghanistan, and then greater expansion to the whole of Afghanistan at some future date.<sup>8</sup> Finally, on 23 July 2004, Alliance leaders approved SHAPE's military plan for a temporary augmentation of assets, reserves and quick reaction forces (an increase of some 1,400 troops) to support the Afghan Presidential elections scheduled for 9 October 2004.<sup>9</sup>

To summarize, in the space of little more than a year, NATO assumed its first out of area expeditionary mission, twice expanded its operations beyond Kabul, and successfully supported both Afghanistan's Constitutional Loya Jirga and its first democratic Presidential election. While NATO's first year in Afghanistan was a success, couldn't NATO, as an alliance of western nations with nearly three million personnel under arms (excluding the US), have done more and operated in a timelier manner?<sup>10</sup> An examination of NATO's structure and the strategic role of SHAPE in planning and generating the forces necessary for NATO's operations in Afghanistan is an essential starting point for understanding what holds NATO back from assuming the full expeditionary role to which it aspires.

## **THE NATO STRUCTURE**

NATO is an Alliance of 26 sovereign nations that operate on consensus politics and joint decision-making. The process of directing military strategic planning is wholly dependant on the speed and specificity with which political consensus is arrived at from the 26 nations which make up the North Atlantic Council (NAC).<sup>11</sup> The NAC, composed of Permanent Representatives from the Alliance nations, has effective political authority and powers of decision derived explicitly from the North Atlantic Treaty, but still answers to the will of the individual national governments.<sup>12</sup> The NATO Secretary General is a senior statesman whose position is vetted by the member nations. The Secretary General serves as Chairman of the NAC, is the principal spokesman for the Alliance and is responsible for directing the process of Alliance consultation and decision-making.<sup>13</sup> The Secretary General's role is primarily political and in accomplishing his mission he is supported by an International Staff (IS). Where Alliance military matters are concerned the IS assists the Secretary General in transmitting political and policy guidance to Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), NATO's Strategic Commander for operations, through NATO's Military Committee (MC) and International Military Staff (IMS).<sup>14</sup>

SHAPE, the headquarters of Allied Command Operations (ACO) is NATO's single strategic command for operational missions and is responsible for military planning, including the identification and requesting of forces required for Alliance missions.<sup>15</sup> While operational control of NATO missions is delegated by SHAPE to the NATO Joint Forces Commands (JFC) in Naples, Italy (responsible for NATO Balkan operations and NATO Training Mission Iraq) and Brunssum, Netherlands (responsible for ISAF operations), all strategic OPLAN development, and mission force generation is the responsibility of SHAPE.

To summarize this process, political guidance on what NATO wants to accomplish militarily flows from the NAC, is articulated to the IS and MC by the Secretary General and is transmitted to SACEUR. SACEUR's staff at SHAPE, operating at the military-strategic level, is responsible for turning this political guidance into an effective military plan, to include recommended tasks and force levels.

## **INSIDE SHAPE: NATO'S STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS**

In November 2003, the International SHAPE Staff was composed of some 2,129 military and civilian personnel.<sup>16</sup> While this large staff, which reduced by several hundred in 2004, is engaged in many functions, when it comes to the strategic planning and oversight of NATO operations the number actively engaged in this function numbers less than 150. Central to this

core group is the SHAPE Command Group (consisting of three four-star officers, SACEUR, Deputy SACEUR or DSACEUR, and Chief of Staff or COS, with their respective staffs), the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, and the SHAPE Strategic Direction Centre.

SACEUR, historically a US general of four-star rank is responsible for all strategic military planning and execution of Alliance missions. Although he routinely corresponds through the IMS to the NAC, he works for the Secretary General and his position permits him direct access to the Secretary General, the NAC Permanent Representatives and the Chiefs of Defense (CHODS) of the various NATO nations. While he is dual hatted as Commander US European Command, SACEUR's primary focus is as NATO's Supreme Commander for Operations. Two additional four-star officers within the SHAPE Command Group support SACEUR in his mission. DSACEUR and COS are positions that historically rotate between Germany and the United Kingdom. DSACEUR is SACEUR's principal deputy, and can be dual hatted to serve as the Operational Commander for European Union (EU) military missions and is responsible for dealing with the militaries of NATO and partner nations in the area of force generation for Alliance operations. COS functions in the traditional role of a Chief of Staff and is responsible for directing all aspects of strategic military planning and execution. Directly subordinate to COS is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCOS OPS). Until November 2004, this US two-star post had been called the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations (ACOS OPS J3). DCOS OPS is responsible for coordinating the activities of the SHAPE Divisions involved in all exercises and real world operations throughout the NATO area of responsibility.<sup>17</sup>

While DCOS OPS and the Command Group comprise the key SHAPE decision makers; strategic planning, force generation and mission review occur under the oversight of SHAPE's Strategic Direction Centre (SDC). The SDC was established in March 1994, in response to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, as an ad-hoc Crisis Response Centre (CRC), and manned by personnel taken from positions within the SHAPE staff to plan, coordinate and oversee real world NATO operations. Over ten years and three name changes (from CRC to Joint Operations Centre, to SHAPE Operations Centre, and finally to SDC), the SDC has functioned as a multi-national, mini-Joint Staff largely outside of SHAPE's Divisions and J-Staff structure, responsible to DCOS OPS and ultimately to the Command Group.<sup>18</sup> The SDC, whose director is a British Colonel, is responsible for Command and Control (C2) of forces assigned to SACEUR (or DSACEUR for EU operations), coordination of strategic plans, provision of direction, assessments and guidance for current or near term operations, force generation and balancing, mission review, 24/7 reporting and notification, and rapid, coordinated and accurate responses to the Command Group; quite a task list for an

organization that numbers less than 70 full time and supporting positions dealing with on-going Balkan, Mediterranean, Afghanistan operations and NATO support to Iraq.<sup>19</sup> The SDC does not operate in a vacuum; it gets constant guidance from the SHAPE command chain and it coordinates closely with its counter parts on the IMS and at the JFC headquarters, liaises with National Military Representatives regarding national troop offers, and with external organizations (e.g., US Central Command) on mission de-confliction. While recent SHAPE restructuring has returned more authority to the J-Staff structure, the SDC will continue to be the place where NATO's strategic military coordination and force generation occurs. As such, grounded with a basic understanding of NATO's strategic political and military structure and processes, the SDC provides the best perspective from which to discuss the issues faced by those involved in planning Alliance operations in Afghanistan at the strategic level.

#### **SAME NAME, SAME BANNER, SAME MISSION: NATO ASSUMES ISAF**

NATO has a formal planning process largely based on US procedures and outlined in Military Concept 133/3 (the rough NATO equivalent of a US Joint Publication) and the Guidelines for Operational Planning.<sup>20</sup> However, NATO's assumption of the ISAF mission did not follow these planning guidelines. In NATO, political guidance to SHAPE in the form of an Initiating Directive technically drives military planning, or specifically Concept of Operations (CONOP) development. According to SDC planners, by early 2003 it was increasingly obvious that politically, NATO wanted to assume the ISAF mission. SHAPE support of German-Netherlands ISAF planning had acquainted SHAPE planners and force generators with the mission requirements. In addition, Canada had already announced that it would assume the lead role in ISAF's Kabul Multi-National Brigade (KMNB) after the German-Netherlands rotation and had sent signals that it favored placing the mission under NATO C2.<sup>21</sup> In fact by March 2003, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands had forwarded a joint request that NATO enhance its support by establishing a multi-national headquarters under NATO C2.<sup>22</sup> As such, in early 2003 despite the absence of an Initiating Directive, the SHAPE Command Group had begun to direct the SDC to develop option papers regarding a NATO assumption of the mission. Though technically informal, these option or position papers were shared with the Secretary General and principals at NATO headquarters and, based on high-level feedback, political and military plans to assume the ISAF mission began to develop simultaneously.<sup>23</sup>

Before these disparate papers could coalesce into a defacto CONOP, SDC planners advocated initiating formal mission analysis to determine requirements rather than allow the series of position papers to transform into NATO's military-strategic mission concept.<sup>24</sup> This did

not occur for a number of reasons. First, by the time NATO leaders seriously considered assuming the ISAF mission, Canada, Germany and other nations had made troop decisions based on the existing ISAF structure. Time was also a constraint. The proposed August 2003 transfer of ISAF to NATO meant that troops and assets would begin flowing into Afghanistan by late June; practically a matter of weeks away and there was concern that a separate mission analysis could come up with a recommended mission and force structure that NATO would be unable to source in such a short timeframe. An additional factor was that ISAF would become JFC Brunssum's first real world mission as an operational headquarters. Unlike its counterpart at JFC Naples, which had exercised operational level C2 of NATO missions in the Balkans since January 2001, to that point JFC Brunssum had only exercised operational C2 in the NATO exercise world.<sup>25</sup> As a result, it was a JFC headquarters still largely configured to support exercise vice real world operations and in the absence of divergent strategic guidance from SHAPE, JFC planners focused on the current ISAF mission and structure from which to establish their operational C2. Based on these issues, on 16 April 2003, the political decision was made for NATO to assume the ISAF mission and for SHAPE to largely copy the existing ISAF mission and structure as the basis for NATO's assumption of the operation.<sup>26</sup> From this guidance SHAPE developed SACEUR OPLAN 10419 which provided the strategic basis for NATO's assumption of ISAF on 11 August 2003.<sup>27</sup>

The wording used by NATO headquarters in announcing the Alliance's decision to assume the ISAF mission is revealing, "Same name, same banner, same mission as NATO enhances ISAF role."<sup>28</sup> Prior to NATO's assumption of strategic C2 and coordination of the ISAF mission, each six-month period saw a quest to identify new lead and supporting nations and each change in lead nation saw a corresponding establishment of a new headquarters. NATO's assumption of the mission solved this problem, by establishing a baseline for the provision of essential operational capabilities, such as intelligence and communications and formalizing continuity in C2 arrangements.<sup>29</sup> These accomplishments notwithstanding, the limitations placed on the military-strategic planners in drafting OPLAN 10419 signaled problems ahead for any expansion of the ISAF mission beyond its present form.

To begin with, UNSCR 1386 that established the ISAF mission, limited ISAF's area of operations (AO) to "Kabul and its surrounding areas."<sup>30</sup> While SDC planners advocated a broad interpretation of surrounding areas, this was a politically untenable position as several NATO nations interpreted UNSCR 1386 in such a way that any change in the current ISAF boundaries and missions would require an additional UNSCR. In the absence of a new resolution, however, the OPLAN was written as broadly as possible to allow the Commander of ISAF to exercise

significant initiative within his set boundaries. SDC planners saw another problem on the horizon, in the area of force generation. Directed to use ISAF's existing structure, SDC planners were hesitant to advocate capabilities they knew Canada, Germany, the Netherlands or other NATO nations either did not have or were unlikely to offer on short notice.<sup>31</sup> As a result, SHAPE's ISAF Force Generation Conference of 23 May 2003, was very successful in filling all the major Combined Joint Statement of Requirement (CJSOR) serials, serials already offered by the major contributing nations.<sup>32</sup> However, there were difficulties in filling low density, specialist CJSOR serials, such as helicopters, intelligence and medical units. These serials were never fully filled under OPLAN 10419, and highlighted a matter that would bedevil SHAPE planners when NATO's political will to expand the ISAF mission set them to work on another OPLAN only a few months later. While recognizing that NATO had finally taken a major step towards becoming an expeditionary Alliance, one SDC planner stated, "you can claim that the only thing NATO did in August [2003] was to relieve ISAF HQ – neither the mission nor the structure changed significantly."<sup>33</sup> Assumption had been relatively easy - expansion would prove to be less so.

#### **OFF TO KONDUZ: EXPANSION PART ONE**

You have to be fast on your feet and adaptive or else a strategy is useless.<sup>34</sup>

—General Charles De Gaulle

On 6 January 2004 a press release from ISAF headquarters announced a ceremony in Konduz marking the official transfer of the German-led Konduz PRT from Coalition to ISAF C2.<sup>35</sup> The press release, however, was a post holiday formality as NATO had assumed control of the PRT on 31 December 2003 and SDC planners viewed the actual occasion as something of an anti-climax. Between ISAF Assumption on 11 August and initial expansion on 31 December, key NATO leaders together with SHAPE and JFC planners had waged a campaign not just to revise the current OPLAN to accommodate the Konduz PRT but to develop a comprehensive plan that would establish the basis for a broader expansion of the ISAF mission.<sup>36</sup>

Less than a month after mission assumption, the SDC was tasked to produce an option paper as the basis for Military Advice on expansion of ISAF in advance of NAC meetings on the subject.<sup>37</sup> While options were provided, there was no political agreement at NAC level on what option to pursue.<sup>38</sup> This lack of agreement was largely based on the expeditionary difficulties posed by the existing ISAF mission. NATO could maintain thousands of soldiers in the Balkans

primarily because it was NATO's backyard. Troops and assets could be readily moved into Bosnia or Kosovo by rail, road or tactical airlift from bases in nearby Western Europe. Afghanistan was a different world entirely. Thousands of miles from Europe, and without viable rail or road infrastructure, the only way to get troops and equipment into Kabul was by air. The sheer expense of getting there notwithstanding, the only effective Aerial Point of Debarkation (APOD) available to NATO was Kabul International Airport (KAIA) and while Germany, as lead nation for KAIA kept this lifeline open, this was an expensive responsibility and one that they would not bear in perpetuity. In addition, though the major components of the ISAF CJSOR had been filled, nations had not come forward to provide key specialty serials such as rotary wing aviation, intelligence personnel or contributions to maintain KAIA in support of the current mission.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, Afghanistan was a dangerous and risky mission compared to the on-going NATO operations in the Balkans. Some 10,000 US-led Coalition troops were actively engaged in combat operations against Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in the southern parts of Afghanistan, Afghan War Lords with thousands of private soldiers under arms held various levels of control throughout the country, and the Afghan Transitional Authority exercised tenuous control, if any, beyond Kabul. Politically, NATO leaders wanted to expand Alliance stability operations using NATO led PRTs. PRTs modeled on existing US-led examples (small teams established in the provinces to provide local presence and security and facilitate construction, humanitarian, and assistance operations), but resourced through Alliance nations and supported by NATO enabling assets offered the best opportunity to extend ISAF stability operations beyond Kabul. Despite this political intent, after weeks of discussion no solution was forthcoming.<sup>40</sup> No solution that is until Germany decided to lay an offer on the table.

In October 2003, Germany formally offered to assume the US led PRT in Konduz on the condition that the PRT fall under NATO C2. NATO political leaders jumped on this offer as, in the words of an SDC Officer, "NATO wanted a quick win [and] Germany offered all the forces required for the expansion and agreed to keep KAIA running."<sup>41</sup> For SHAPE planners, Germany's offer was both a blessing and a curse. Granted, the German offer would expand NATO influence beyond Kabul, but the military concern was that this offer was in essence a half measure; an initiative where Germany was joining the US PRT program under a cosmetic NATO umbrella without the benefit of a coherent NATO package. SHAPE planners wanted PRTs modeled on existing US-led examples and completely supported by NATO enabling assets; the German PRT offered neither. The German plan envisioned a PRT eventually numbering 450 personnel, many times larger than the US PRT it would replace and containing a

large civilian contingent that would not be subordinate to military control except for emergencies. Additionally, the PRT would remain dependant on Coalition (US-led CJTF-180), rather than ISAF support for *in extremis* (NATO planning term for high threat, emergency scenarios) situations.<sup>42</sup>

The issue now before the NAC was whether to direct a military plan that would cover the entire expansion or write a specific plan expressly tailored for the German PRT. Key Alliance leaders, especially the Secretary General and SACEUR, were adamant that real ISAF expansion must be sustainable, based on long-term goals, not dependant on the Coalition for critical support, and sufficiently bold in scope. While Germany's offer threatened to side-track critical debate in the NAC over a coherent expansion plan, a protracted debate could delay the establishment of the German PRT, now called the PRT Pilot Project, to such a degree that Germany was likely to establish it under Coalition control anyway and withdraw its offer to NATO entirely.<sup>43</sup> As a result, NATO's decision was to direct military planning to both revise the existing OPLAN to support initial expansion in Konduz and to develop a broad CONOP to support future expansion.<sup>44</sup> While obedient to this political direction, the SDC Director informed the Command Group that, "you should be aware that we will probably end up initially with two issues you wanted to avoid – namely, a parallel PRT structure and heavy reliance on CJTF-180."<sup>45</sup>

On 13 October 2003, UNSCR 1510 authorized the expansion of ISAF's mission to support the government of Afghanistan beyond Kabul.<sup>46</sup> At SHAPE, revising OPLAN 10419 was relatively easy, as Germany provided the troops and key assets, such as rotary wing and fixed wing assets to support its PRT and the Coalition agreed to provide *in extremis* close air and quick reaction force support.<sup>47</sup> OPLAN 10419 Revision 1 was completed in short order and approved by the NAC at the end of November 2003. In addition to incorporating the Konduz PRT within the ISAF structure, the revision authorized ISAF to support Afghanistan's electoral process and to conduct temporary deployments for specific tasks and of limited size and duration outside of the Kabul area at Commander JFC Brunssum's discretion.<sup>48</sup> The original OPLAN had required NAC authorization of such deployments and this change was a hard won step in the direction towards the broad OPLAN that SHAPE and JFC planners had initially envisioned for expansion.

With initial expansion set for the end of December, the Alliance was politically buoyant.<sup>49</sup> For the military planners, however, continuing shortages in ISAF and KAIA CJSOR serials were a harbinger of the difficulties they anticipated in executing the expansion CONOP they had developed. The final version of the expansion CONOP went to the NAC on 19 December 2003

and its plan for a staged expansion of NATO operations throughout Afghanistan was broadly accepted. However, two days earlier in his farewell speech to the NAC, outgoing Secretary General Robertson made a point of warning nations that political will must be matched by real commitment.

Nations will have to waken up to what they have taken on. Expansion must be credible, and be seen to be credible. Money, troops and long-term commitment are the only ingredients of success – and the only way Afghanistan's problems will not come west to haunt us. Failure would be a crushing blow, not just for NATO but also for every NATO country...and for the concept of multilateralism in international relations. We had the mettle to deal with Bosnia's murderous warlords. We had better find more iron in our soul to deal with Afghanistan's variety.<sup>50</sup>

## **STAGED NATO EXPANSION AND SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS**

Force generation in NATO has never been a particularly fun time.<sup>51</sup>

—General James L. Jones

If planning NATO's ISAF assumption had been a case of making the plan fit existing offers, and planning initial ISAF expansion an exercise in compromise, the next stage of ISAF expansion would prove to be an experience in frustration, as it would expose NATO's Achilles heel, force generation. SACEUR's above quote to a *New York Times* reporter in October 2004 summarizes the primary struggle SHAPE planners encountered once the Konduz PRT had been established. The hard fact is that NATO, as an organization owns no military assets other than a fleet of Airborne Early Warning Aircraft (AWACs). SHAPE may be directed to plan a mission and the NAC may approve the resulting OPLAN, but the military execution of Alliance political intent is wholly dependent on the various member nations first having, then offering effective military capabilities and assets.

SHAPE is responsible for Alliance force generation and has sight of most national assets and capabilities, as each nation provides a list of its capabilities potentially available to NATO through an Alliance document called the Defense Planning Questionnaire (DPQ).<sup>52</sup> However, the DPQ bears no resemblance to what US planners would call allocated or apportioned forces, as the capabilities listed are those that nations may only be willing to volunteer for NATO operations. As such, the DPQ is not a sound document against which to even plan at the strategic level. Instead, SHAPE force generators, including at times even DSACEUR, are often forced to operate like agents for charity organizations; calling potential donors (or in this case National Military Representatives) to ask what they are willing to contribute to a mission.<sup>53</sup> This

is the situation that confronted SHAPE when directed by the NAC to plan both a broad NATO expansion and later a temporary mission to support Afghan elections. Elaborating on this process, however, is less important than briefly describing how the Alliance's ability to politically agree on plans was not matched by the willingness to resource them.

SHAPE's CONOP for ISAF expansion was approved in January 2004 and briefed to the new Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, on 20 January.<sup>54</sup> The CONOP called for a staged ISAF expansion of NATO PRTs. Stage 1 of expansion called for the establishment of five PRTs in the North by June 2004, with Stage 2 of expansion into the West of Afghanistan to occur later in the year. Stages 3 and 4 envisioned a longer-term assumption of Coalition PRTs throughout the remainder of the country.<sup>55</sup> SHAPE was directed to begin development of a new OPLAN sufficient to support all stages of expansion but with detailed CJSOR development for Stage 1 expansion and separate and more general requirements for Stage 2 expansion. The draft plan, to include the Stage 1 CJSOR was provided to NATO headquarters for review on 17 February 2004.<sup>56</sup> After incorporating comments from NATO headquarters and the JFC commander, SACEUR OPLAN 10302 was approved on 14 April 2004. While the plan was ready, the Alliance did not execute Stage 1 expansion until 28 June, some two and a half months later.

Why the delay? One reason was an initial lack of agreement concerning just where to establish the Stage 1 PRTs, which nations would lead them and how they should be configured. This problem was resolved by the establishment of a PRT Executive Steering Committee that in consultation with SACEUR, the JFC Commander, lead, or framework nations and Afghan authorities recommended the most appropriate locations and structures for NATO PRTs.<sup>57</sup> Another issue was the need to establish ISAF HQ continuity beyond the Canadian led headquarters that would transition in August 2004 and into the following years. SHAPE was actively engaged in this effort and EUROCORPS was slated to provide the ISAF command and staff backbone for the August rotation, with other NATO affiliated headquarters scheduled on six-month rotations through 2007.<sup>58</sup> Agreement on Rules of Engagement (ROE), e.g., riot control, and acceptable missions, e.g., how to support counter drug efforts, were also issues. However, in true NATO fashion, the plan was written broadly enough to allow nations to opt in or out of ROE or missions in which nations did not want or could not legally allow their troops to participate.<sup>59</sup> None of these issues, though demanding significant political and strategic effort, were the reason for NATO's two plus month delay in executing expansion. Simply put, the political will of nations to expand was not matched in offers of the assets and capabilities

required to expand and the weakness of NATO's force generation process was exposed for all to see.

Without detailing a classified NATO CJSOR one need only read the headlines and mark the dates of various assets trickling into ISAF to gauge what was required and what was lacking during the period. The headlines of three NATO press releases, "Apache Helicopters arrive in ISAF", 1 April 2004 – "Turkish helicopters arrive in Kabul", 2 June 2004 – "Portuguese C-130 Hercules and crew arrive in Kabul", 21 July 2004, are sufficient examples. Shortages of essential expansion assets were not limited to aviation, however, and from April until June 2004 SACEUR remained steadfast on not implementing ISAF expansion until nations sufficiently filled the critical CJSOR serials that would allow the mission to be successful. While this caused angst at the NAC, it was self-inflicted angst in that all 26 NATO nations had been aware of and had approved the need for these critical requirements as early as February 2004. Eventually, external pressure, characterized by an *Economist* article titled, "NATO fails a test",<sup>60</sup> the looming Istanbul Summit and an internal resolve not to fail led to sufficient offers of critical assets to allow the 28 June launch of NATO's ISAF expansion.

Concurrent to OPLAN development, SHAPE had also been directed to plan for an increase in NATO's presence in Afghanistan to support the nation's Presidential elections originally slated for June 2004, but later postponed until October 2004. The plan initially suffered from the same "sticker shock" or inability to elicit significant offers as the expansion OPLAN. However, after the struggle to source expansion, by July NATO nations found the resolve and commensurate assets to announce a substantial level of support to the 9 October Presidential elections. Assets that only a few months earlier SHAPE had found impossible to force generate, such as Close Air Support aircraft, additional tactical and rotary wing transport, aerial refueling assets, and in theater Quick Reaction Forces (to include the first US ground troops dedicated to the ISAF CJSOR) were offered and in place in time to support Afghanistan's first democratic election.<sup>61</sup> By October 2004 NATO had cleared its first expeditionary hurdle but had it resolved its primary shortcoming?

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Allies are both a curse and a blessing. They can share the strategic load, but they can also increase it.<sup>62</sup>

—Colin S. Gray

On 9 December 2004, NATO announced that it had approved the 'Stage 2' expansion of NATO PRTs into the West of Afghanistan.<sup>63</sup> Was this announcement also a sign that NATO

had at last overcome its primary shortcoming? In some ways the answer is a short term yes, but also a longer term no. Frustration with the existing force generation process had driven Alliance military leaders to attempt a new method to gain longer-term visibility of force provision for NATO's military operations. As a result, on 23 November 2004, SHAPE hosted the first Global Force Generation Conference (GFGC). Before the GFGC, forces for NATO operations such as KFOR, SFOR and ISAF had been provided through individual, operation specific, force generation conferences. The GFGC's intent was to brief nations on Alliance long-term, operational requirements, provide nations with some certainty in force planning and to better verify and orchestrate national contributions to Alliance missions.<sup>64</sup> On the whole, the GFGC was a success in that it resulted in offers to support Stage 2 expansion and certified definite contributions to Alliance missions through 2005, while outlining provisional offers and shortfalls through 2006. While the GFGC will now become an annual program better tailored than the DPQ and mission specific conferences to support all on-going NATO missions, it is neither the equivalent of a US Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) nor the panacea some within the Alliance envision.

While it may appear a statement of the obvious that NATO is not a coalition of the willing, that said, will is a necessary commodity for the Alliance to develop reliable mechanisms to identify, apportion and deploy forces for military missions. No GFGC can overcome the fact that most NATO nations continue to downsize their armed forces and invest little if anything toward the development of expeditionary capabilities. Most Alliance militaries continue to retain Cold War organizations and capabilities while their political leaders remain comfortable with the Cold War planning procedures and processes that still drive day to day Alliance operations. Does, for example, the Alliance still need 17 commonly funded AWACs aircraft, or would it not make better expeditionary sense to instead commonly fund an equivalent number of strategic lift and tanker assets? Common funding is another issue. Why will the Alliance spend common funds to upgrade Alliance infrastructure in Western Europe, but balk at paying to contract Air Traffic Control and Airbase support activities in Afghanistan? Likewise, until other nations expand their expeditionary capabilities, how can the US expect the other Alliance nations to provide scarce and costly assets to expeditionary missions that it is not directly (within a NATO CJSOR) contributing to? The answer to these and other related questions is will; will on the part of individual nations and on the Alliance as a whole to become more streamlined and capable of sustained expeditionary missions.

The Alliance must do several things to prove that its political will is matched by a resolve to provide expeditionary capabilities and assets to Alliance missions. First, the GFGC must

become a formal process where the very nations who have approved an Alliance mission demonstrate willingness up front to provide the capabilities essential for the mission's long-term success. Next, the Alliance must make the NATO Response Force (NRF) available for deployment in support of on-going NATO missions. It makes no sense to retain a force of 17,000 plus NATO troops, ships and aircraft ostensibly ready to deploy quickly for a full range of (hypothetical) missions, yet balk at their employment in Afghanistan and instead rely on separate force generation within a stretched Alliance to meet operational needs.<sup>65</sup> The Alliance must also modernize its common funding rules. This Cold War legacy must be brought into line with NATO's 21<sup>st</sup> century expeditionary requirements. It is absurd to consider that Alliance dollars are spent on revitalizing European infrastructure while forcing nations to singly bear the brunt of expeditionary mission requirements. Likewise, transformation must extend to common Alliance assets. A fleet of Cold War era AWACs may remain a valuable and necessary common asset, but surely an Alliance that leases the majority of its strategic lift must recognize the value of an investment in its own strategic lift capabilities to support its expeditionary aspirations. While Alliance nations must continue to modernize their armed forces, commonly funded strategic lift could affordably give NATO (and the EU) a truly global expeditionary reach. Finally, the US despite its current involvement in the Global War on Terror, must commit critical assets and capabilities to the very NATO missions it wants, commensurate with its leading role in the Alliance. While NATO is an alliance of sovereign equals, US military capabilities far outstrip those of its fellow allies and if there is one certainty in NATO (the situation in Iraq excluded), it is that where the US leads, in will and capabilities, the Alliance will follow. As Secretary General Robertson said in December 2003, "money, troops and long-term commitment are the only ingredients of success" and if NATO wants to succeed in Afghanistan and truly become expeditionary it must at the level of political will, find the iron in its soul to make the changes necessary for real transformation.<sup>66</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

NATO's ISAF mission has seen the Alliance successfully plan, resource and execute its first expeditionary mission. It is true that problems remain; strategic planning continues to be driven by the limits of political consensus and the force generation dragon has only been subdued, not slain. Yet it is also true that lessons have been learned and procedures have matured to the point that the strategic long term goal of NATO assuming the entire mission in Afghanistan is now a clear probability rather than a wished for possibility. SHAPE has and continues to play an essential role in planning, resourcing and executing NATO operations and

from SHAPE's military strategic perspective on ISAF; a qualified success is still a success. For the Alliance to get beyond this point, however, it must find the political will to make the changes necessary to ensure that future success is real and total, not transitory and qualified.

WORD COUNT=6,268



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *Quarterly ISAF Report to UNSECGEN for 11 Aug 03 – 11 Nov 03*. SHAPE, Belgium, 14 November 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *Quarterly ISAF Report to UNSECGEN for 12 Nov 03 – 12 Feb 04*. SHAPE, Belgium, 16 February 2004.

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<sup>8</sup> NATO HQ, "NATO in Afghanistan – How did this operation evolve?" NATO WebPages October 2004; available from <<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/evolution.htm>>; Internet; accessed 11 November 2004.

<sup>9</sup> NATO HQ, "NATO in Afghanistan – Fact Sheet", NATO WebPages September 2004; available from <<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/evolution.htm>>; Internet; accessed 10 October 2004.

<sup>10</sup> NATO HQ, "Armed Forces (2003 Estimate)", NATO WebPages December 2003; available from <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2003/p03-146e.htm>>; Internet; accessed 10 October 2004.

<sup>11</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels, Belgium: 2001), 152.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 219-220.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 239-241.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>16</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "SHAPE Community", SHAPE WebPages November 2003; available from <<http://www.nato.int/shape/community/overview.htm>>; Internet; accessed 11 November 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "Restructuring SHAPE", SHAPE WebPages October 2004; available from <<http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2004/10/i041028a.htm>>; Internet; accessed 11 November 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Doctor Greg Pedlow, SHAPE Historian, interview by author, 24 September 2004, Mons, Belgium.

<sup>19</sup> Graham Evans <graham23\_99@yahoo.com>, "SDC Brief", electronic mail message to Steve Beckman <steven.beckman@carlisle.army.mil>, 8 October 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Jones <Michael.Jones@cjps.nato.int>, "Comm Check – comments from J5 planners", electronic mail message to Steve Beckman <steven.beckman@carlisle.army.mil>, 24 September 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> NATO HQ, "Same name, same banner, same mission as NATO enhances ISAF role", NATO WebPages April 2003; available from <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2003/04-april/e0416a.htm>>; Internet; accessed 10 October 2004.

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<sup>24</sup> Robbie Schrujjer <robert.schrujjer@shape.nato.int>, "Questions", electronic mail message to Steve Beckman <steven.beckman@carlisle.army.mil>, 20 October 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Joint Force Command Naples, "AFSOUTH Fact Sheets", JFC Naples WebPages; available from <<http://www.afsouth.nato.int/archives/chronology.htm>>; Internet; accessed 20 September 2004.

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<sup>27</sup> Jones.

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<sup>29</sup> NATO Briefings, "Working to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan."

<sup>30</sup> NATO Briefings, "Working to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan."

<sup>31</sup> Jones.

<sup>32</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "SHAPE Holds Force Generation Conference for ISAF", SHAPE WebPages May 2003; available from <<http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2003/05/i030523.htm>>; Internet; accessed 13 November 2004.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles De Gaulle, "Charles De Gaulle Quotes", [database on line]; available from Brainyquote.com; accessed 14 January 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Joint Force Command Brumsum, "ISAF Assumes Control of Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team", JFC Brumsum WebPages; available from <[http://www.afnorth.nato.int/ISAF/Update/Press\\_Release2004\\_02.htm](http://www.afnorth.nato.int/ISAF/Update/Press_Release2004_02.htm)>; Internet; accessed 20 September 2004.

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<sup>37</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *SACEUR SDC SUMMARY 11 Sep 03*. SHAPE, Belgium, 11 September 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *SACEUR SDC SUMMARY 3 Oct 03*. SHAPE, Belgium, 3 October 2003.

<sup>39</sup> LTC Steve Beckman, "ISAF Trip Report", memorandum for SDC Director, SHAPE, Belgium, 4 November 2003.

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<sup>41</sup> Jones.

<sup>42</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *SACEUR SDC SUMMARY 10 Oct 03*. SHAPE, Belgium, 10 October 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *SACEUR SDC SUMMARY 17 Oct 03*. SHAPE, Belgium, 17 October 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> NATO Briefings, "Working to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan."

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<sup>48</sup> NATO HQ, "Final Communique' – Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Defense Ministers Session held in Brussels on Monday, 1 December 2003", NATO WebPages December 2003; available from <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2003/p03-148e.htm>>; Internet; accessed 10 November 2004.

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<sup>56</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *SACEUR SDC SUMMARY 20 Feb 04*. SHAPE, Belgium, 20 February 2004.

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<sup>58</sup> NATO HQ, "Long-term commitment to Afghanistan", NATO WebPages November 2004; available from <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/11-november/e11110a.htm>>; Internet; accessed 16 November 2004.

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<sup>60</sup> NATO fails a test – The Alliance has missed a chance to help both Afghanistan and itself", *The Economist*, 19 June 2004, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, "NATO Support to Afghan elections", NATO WebPages 10 September 2004; available from <<http://www.nato.int/shape/news/2004/09/i040910b.htm>>; Internet; accessed 16 November 2004.

<sup>62</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: University Press, 1999), 169.

<sup>63</sup> NATO HQ, "Foreign Ministers agree on expanded NATO roles in Iraq, Afghanistan", NATO WebPages December 2004; available from <<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/12-december/e1209c.htm>>; Internet; accessed 11 December 2004.

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## GLOSSARY

ACO	Allied Command Operations
ANA	Afghan National Army
ATA	Afghan Transitional Authority
AWAC	Airborne Early Warning Aircraft
CHODS	Chiefs of Defense
CJSOR	Combined Joint Statement of Requirements
CLJ	Constitutional Loya Jirga
CONOP	Concept of Operation
COS	Chief of Staff
DCOS OPS	Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration
DPQ	Defense Planning Questionnaire
DSACEUR	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe
EU	European Union
GFGC	Global Force Generation Conference
HWC	Heavy Weapons Cantonment
IMS	International Military Staff
IS	International Staff
ISAF	International Security and Assistance Force
JFC	Joint Forces Command
KAIA	Kabul International Airport
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MC	Military Committee
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NRF	NATO Response Force
OPLAN	Operations Plan
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SDC	Strategic Direction Center
SFOR	Stabilization Force
SHAPE	Supreme HQ Allied Powers Europe
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution



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