



Press Statement

Tom Casey, Deputy Spokesman

Washington, DC

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NATO Assumes Military Command in Afghanistan

In a ceremony earlier today in Kabul, command of international military security operations in eastern Afghanistan was formally handed over to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), effectively placing responsibility for security operations throughout Afghanistan under NATO command. As a result of this decision, nearly 12,000 U.S. troops have joined their NATO counterparts in the International Security Assistance Force under NATO Regional Command East, bringing the total numbers of NATO's ISAF force to roughly 33,000 troops from 37 nations, including 23 Provisional Reconstructions Teams throughout the country. We note that 8,000 U.S. troops will remain under U.S. command to continue counterterrorism operations and the provision of support to reconstruction, training and equipping of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.

We are pleased that the success of coalition military operations, steady progress through developmental and humanitarian and assistance efforts, and close coordination between the U.S., NATO, and Afghan security forces have made this decision possible. Bringing all these troops under unified command will enhance operational effectiveness, promote flexibility in the use of military assets, continued success in confronting terrorists and insurgents, and accelerate the pace of reconstruction and development efforts.

With over 20,000 troops in Afghanistan, the U.S. remains the single largest contributor of troops and capability to NATO's Afghanistan operations, while also maintaining a robust counterterrorism force throughout the country. We look forward to continued success in assisting President Karzai and the people of Afghanistan in pursuit of their vision of a democratic, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan.

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