

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

The Wall Street Journal

## NATO Calls for Key Role in Afghanistan After 2014

By Stephen Fidler

03/02/2012

### Rasmussen Says Alliance Should Carry On Mission After 2014, Including Troop Training

BRUSSELS - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's chief said he expected a key role for the alliance in Afghanistan even after Afghan security forces take over all combat operations in the country.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO secretary-general, said in an interview Thursday he expected a summit of NATO leaders in Chicago in May to agree to continue its troop-training mission in Afghanistan after 2014. He said those trainers would need alliance troops to protect them.

But NATO members also are debating whether the alliance's troops will have any broader role, including continuing combat operations, in support of Afghan troops.

Any continued mission after 2014 would depend upon a request from Kabul, he said. The Afghan government has had a fraught relationship with the alliance, blaming it for strikes that have killed civilians and night raids that have riled Muslim sensitivities.

"Any role from our side will be a supporting role," Mr. Rasmussen said. "I think it's a bit premature to definitely define what will be the exact mission post-2014 because it will very much depend on the security situation."

Mr. Rasmussen also addressed whether any Afghan mission is better handled under the auspices of NATO or by a separate international coalition.

"I think whatever option we are thinking about, I think most allies and partners would have a preference for a NATO-led operation," he said. "This is also based on previous experience that NATO provides a tested and tried framework for command and control structures that are transparent, that are well suited to exercise political supervision."

Thursday, a day when two more U.S. soldiers were killed by Afghan colleagues amid a spasm of violence after the burning of Qurans at an American airfield last week, Mr. Rasmussen said the alliance would be faced with more such security challenges in the coming months and years. But he insisted the transition from foreign to Afghan control of security operations was working and on track.

Afghan security forces are now taking part in 95% of all security operations in Afghanistan, and have taken the lead in about 40% of them, Mr. Rasmussen said. Afghans conduct 85% of all training activities themselves, he added.

"These are significant achievements that demonstrate the progress we have seen when it comes to capacity of the Afghan security forces," Mr. Rasmussen said. "This is also why I feel confident that we can complete the transition by 2014." By the end of next year, he said transition to Afghan command would "probably" be under way everywhere in Afghanistan.

Last month, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said that American forces would end their combat role in Afghanistan as early as mid-2013, more than a year before all American troops are scheduled to come home.

Mr. Rasmussen said that before the Chicago summit NATO will take key decisions on how large the future Afghan security force should be—but it was premature to fix a figure now. The U.S., which along with its allies funds Afghanistan's military and police forces, has circulated proposals to cut Afghan troop numbers to 230,000 after 2014 from 352,000, a proposal that the Afghan defense minister has said could lead to a catastrophe.

"What might be the long-term size will of course very much depend on the evolving security situation, the capability of the Afghan security forces and, at the end of the day, it's also a question about the bill and how to finance it," he said.

Countries including Germany and Norway are also pressing the alliance to decide on a new posture toward nuclear weapons, arguing there is an opportunity to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. NATO members including France argue against that.

Mr. Rasmussen said he didn't expect major changes at the Chicago summit. He said it would be worth considering the goal of reducing NATO's tactical nuclear weapons in Europe—but only in tandem with Russia. "A precondition of that approach would be increased transparency" on the Russian side, he said.

He also said that he expected the Chicago summit to advance a number of multinational projects aimed at getting more out of squeezed defense budgets. About 20 concrete projects had been identified for cooperation, for example, in logistics, intelligence, reconnaissance and training.

Bigger longer-term initiatives were also being developed for 2020 and beyond, including more air-to-air refueling capability—a lack of which was identified in last year's Libya mission—and more drones.