

A FIRST IN NATO: PEACE OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Major General Hilmi Akin Zorlu

Former Commander International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF-II)

It is an honour for me to address you, today, about the activities of ISAF and, tomorrow, about the lessons learned from the ISAF mission. My presentation will cover the following topics: ISAF-II, the security situation in Kabul, and the restructuring process in Afghanistan.

Before describing ISAF-II, I would like to say a few words in general concerning the global security situation and peace support operations. As is well-known, nowadays radical changes are taking place in both diplomatic and military terms. Following the end of the Cold War, the conventional military threat was replaced by multidirectional threats such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional uncertainties and instabilities, organized crime and drug trafficking. As Turkey is a country located in the middle of current and potential conflicts, unfortunately we already have been familiar with many kinds of these threats especially in the context of terrorism for many years. I believe that international cooperation is the only way to cope with these threats. Therefore, there is a requirement for a comprehensive approach to the concept of security. In this context, all nations should consider basing their foreign policy on the famous saying of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, "Peace at home, peace in the world." Taking this saying as guidance, Turkey has been taking part in many multinational operations since the Korean War, in order to contribute regional and global peace. It is an undeniable fact that the United Nations has always played an important role in establishing regional and global peace. Today many peace support operations in different parts of the world are going on under UN mandates.

In this context, the United Nations authorized the International Security Assistance Force, known as ISAF, by UN Security Council Resolution 1386 of 20 December 2001. ISAF was tasked to assist the Afghan interim authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas. As you know, Turkey has been participating in ISAF from the beginning and I wish to take you over to Kabul, during the period of Turkish leadership of ISAF. Following the initial phase, Turkey took over the second term of command of ISAF from the United Kingdom on 20 June 2002, as authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1413 of 23 May 2002. Normally, we should have handed over command of ISAF on 20 December 2002, but no other country was ready to take this commitment. So, the UN Security Council extended Turkish leadership until 10 February 2003. At the end of this extension, we handed over command to Germany and the Netherlands, in other words, to a German-Dutch corps. Following ISAF-III, NATO took over the responsibility of ISAF as of 11 August 2003. Turkey is still continuing to contribute to ISAF with troops and staff officers.

As to the mission of ISAF at that time, during the Turkish leadership the core mission was to assist the Afghan interim authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas. The responsibility for providing security and law and order rests with the Afghan authorities as defined in the Bonn Agreement of 5 December 2001 and also related

UN Security Council resolutions. The main threat to the security and stability of Kabul is posed by the remnants of Taliban and Al-Qaeda, as well as by various groups opposed to the existence of the transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan. Taliban and Al-Qaeda remnants are able to carry out isolated attacks and rarely disrupt daily life in the city.

During the Turkish leadership, the ISAF Headquarters was under the command and control of the Turkish General Staff. Operations were executed in coordination with US Central Command based in Tampa, Florida. At that time ISAF's area of responsibility was 50 km in the north-south direction and 45 km in the east-west direction. The total covered area was 2250 km². ISAF has authorized personnel strength of roughly 4800 from 22 countries. The ISAF leadership was able to establish excellent relations with the Afghan authorities and also worked in close coordination with the United Nations representatives. ISAF expended great efforts on initiating a comprehensive security coordination and intelligence sharing system, both among the Afghan security forces and between those forces and ISAF. ISAF conducted a strong public information campaign using all available means to describe the role and tasks of the ISAF forces. For instance, ISAF published newssheets every two weeks, giving ISAF news in English, Peştu and Dari languages and distributed 50,000 copies throughout the city free of charge. In addition, more than 150,000 leaflets were printed and distributed during our term. ISAF also ran two radio stations, "Radio Türkiyem" and "Voice of Freedom", broadcasting all over the area of Kabul.

I believe in that establishing and maintaining relations with a variety of civilian authorities and organizations is a very important activity in any peace support operation. Therefore, Civil-Military Cooperation Operations, known in brief as CMIC, was an essential part of ISAF activities. CMIC always played an important role, not only in the ongoing reconstruction and rehabilitation process of Kabul and its surrounding areas, but also in establishing good relations with the Afghan people. In this context, education and healthcare took priority in CMIC activities. During Turkish leadership 176 projects mainly related with education and healthcare were completed.

During ISAF-II, the security situation in Kabul was calm and quiet, and according to many surveys the crime rate was really lower than in many Western cities. That is why, after consulting with the Ministry of the Interior, the night curfew was lifted for the first time in 23 years. No major incidents occurred after the night curfew was lifted. Naturally this greatly boosted the morale of the local population and also encouraged foreign businessmen and investments to come to Kabul and to invest in some essential institutions and facilities. ISAF also tried to meet the equipment requirements of the Kabul police and security personnel serving at the entry-exit points of Kabul. It is ironic that in a country with many regional armies and a heavily armed population, only the police lacked weapons and ammunition in their hands and in their police stations.

As I mentioned earlier, the Bonn Agreement had initiated the process of restructuring in Afghanistan. The first step in this respect was the establishment of a transitional authority in Afghanistan under the leadership of President Karzai. A constitutional commission was set up under the supervision of the former King in order to adopt a new constitution by the end of 2003. The constitutional Loya Jirga will convene at the beginning of December 2003 in order to discuss and adopt a new constitution for the country. The establishment of a national army, which is very important for the security of the whole of Afghanistan, has been continuing under the leadership of the USA.

In conclusion, the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Bonn process has been satisfactory. But, there is a lot of work to do and be achieved. In my opinion, ISAF should continue until the successful completion of the Bonn process and I believe that international efforts should continue until the ongoing process achieves success. As a final word, the international community should not repeat its mistake of earlier years of leaving Afghanistan to its own fate.