

## AFGHANISTAN: FRANCE PRESENT BOTH IN THE EAST AND IN THE SOUTH

*"France will keep its troops in Afghanistan as long as it takes to win this fight. We will not surrender to terrorists. We will not give in to torture. We will stay until we win."*

(Statement made by French President Nicolas Sarkozy during the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan on June 12, 2008)

*"France is not alone in Afghanistan. I want to express how upset I was to see other European armies, your Brothers in Arms, kneeling before your coffins. It is not a coincidence that 25 out of 27 European Union Member States are present in Afghanistan."*

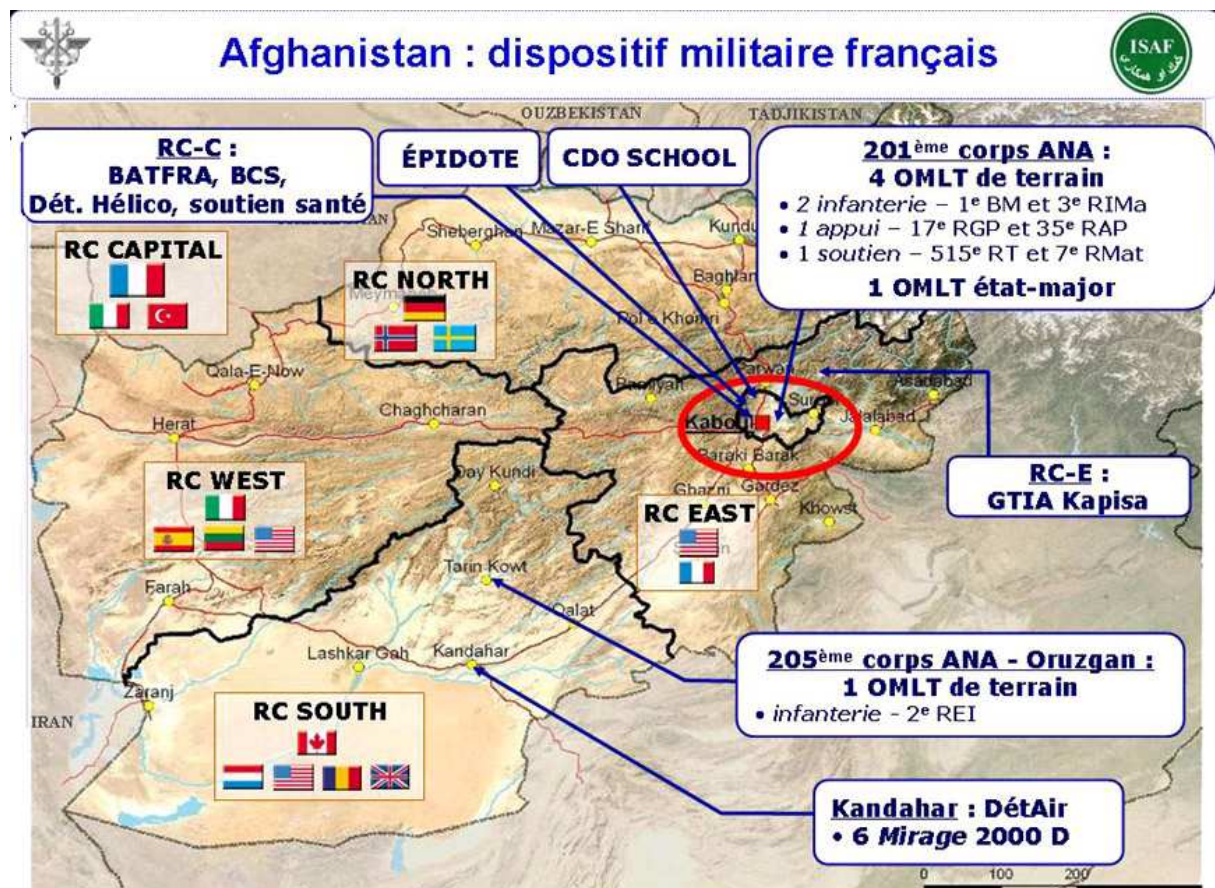
(Speech made by the President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, tribute to the soldiers who died in Afghanistan on August 18, 2008)



## 1. France has not turned a blind eye to Canada's call for help in Afghanistan

Since 2001, French troops have been involved in Afghanistan. Around 3,400 French troops are currently in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Indian Ocean as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), NATO and the Enduring Freedom Operation (EFO). Among these troops, 2,800 French troops are directly engaged in Afghan territories, namely in Kabul, Kandahar, Uruzgan (south) and the Kapisa regions, east of Kabul.

French troops participate in the fight against terrorism and the stabilization of Afghanistan with ground, naval and air support implemented through UN resolutions and other international agreements. Each country's participation in ISAF has been negotiated within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and these countries are working together in accordance with the terms of the missions entrusted to them by the Alliance; **there are no caveats on French troops**. Their participation, which is not limited by any parliamentary mandate, makes up **France' main military intervention theatre abroad**:



### - Regional command in Kabul:

More than 1,400 troops assigned to the regional command centre in Kabul, under **French command**. In August 2008, France took over the rotating command of the capital, until August 2009, aiming to enable Afghans to take over themselves. The transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan security forces in Kabul took effect on August 28, 2008.

## - **The rise of the Afghan National Army**

France also plays an active role in training the Afghan Army, with around 350 troops assigned to training Afghan officers (Operation Epidote), special forces (Commando School) and to integrate into Afghan units through the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT).

This mission is essential for the long-term stabilization of the country: more than **5,000 officers have been trained** by French instructors, with a 2007 budget of 1.4 million Euros.

Through the OMLT, approximately 280 instructors have integrated into operational units of the Afghan National Army; they accompany and direct these troops in all missions. Currently, the French troops provide weapons to **six OMLTs**; four OMLTs and one general staff—are assigned to the 201th Corps of the Afghan National Army deployed to the Kabul zone and one OMLT of around 70 soldiers linked to the 205th Corps of the Afghan National Army, as well as a Dutch contingent deployed to the Uruzgan province (regional command in the south).

## - **Kapisa Combined Arms Tactical Forces**

At the 2008 Bucharest NATO Summit (April 2–4), the President of the Republic announced that **France would send an additional 700 soldiers to eastern Afghanistan** to contain al-Qaida infiltrations at the Pakistan border. This had made it possible for American troops to be redeployed in southern Afghanistan to assist Canadian troops in Kandahar.

Since August 9, 2008, the Kapisa Combined Joint Task Force, located north-east of Kabul and made up of 600 soldiers, is fully operational and American Forward Operating Bases (FOB) relief operations in Nijrab and Tagab were terminated. About 100 additional troops joined the Kabul Support Command to support the Combined Arms Tactical Forces.

The Kapisa Combined Joint Task Force was placed under the eastern regional command, currently overseen by the American General Schloesser.

## - **Air support:**

Since October 2001, France has provided air support to ISAF and Enduring Freedom Operation (EFO), in areas such as land troops, information, transport and supplies.

This support comes from Kabul and **Kandahar**, Afghanistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and Manas, Kyrgyzstan. On four occasions, it was reinforced by the air group from the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle navigating in the northern Indian Ocean:

- **Kabul:** deployment of five helicopters, three Caracal and two Gazelle.

- **Kandahar:** deployment of 70 troops to the Kandahar base and, since September 30, 2007, six combat planes (six Mirages 2000 D), that previously operated from Dushanbe.
- **Manas:** a C135 supplies French and foreign aircrafts.



## - **Naval Air Force**

The mission of the marine component of the Enduring Freedom Operation (EFO), which includes the Task Force (TF) 150 and 57, is to carry out aeromarine controls of the Northern Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, to prevent terrorist movement in the Afghanistan regions of the Arabian Peninsula or the Horn of Africa, to fight against illegal trafficking, i.e. drugs, weapons, piracy, banditry, and to protect oil facilities at sea.

There are always two French ships acting on behalf of the TF 150. France also took part in the TF 57 with an Atlantic 2 aircraft based in Djibouti.

Since the TF 150 was created, the day after the 9/11 attacks, France has twice assumed its command; France has continuously supported counter-terrorism actions.

## 2. **The French Mission's Choices**

- The situation in **Kabul** remains fragile: during the last months, the Taliban have infiltrated the capital city in order to undertake suicide attacks. A country cannot be reasonably secured if its government has not been secured first: this is the task which has been assigned to the French forces, a choice which is supported by the Afghan government itself.

- France is directly responsible for the most difficult sectors in the Kabul region, such as Surobi, strategically located on the road to Pakistan, which gives access the capital's hydroelectric dam and is continuously threatened by the Taliban.

- In July 2008, an additional battalion was deployed to the Kapisa province, north-east of Kabul, to take over from American troops. This is a **strategic province** for the coalition. This **gateway to the Afghan capital** is a hostile zone, where the Taliban are especially active.

- That being said, our medium-term objective is to **transfer the entire responsibility of their own security to the Afghan authorities.**

### 3. France's participation in the reconstruction effort

France is part of the international reconstruction effort in a bilateral manner, but mainly through UN agencies and the European Union. **France funds approximately 16%, or 1.5 billion Canadian dollars earmarked for 2002-2006, of the EU contributions.**

The eradication of poppy cultivation remains the most serious challenge for the country. In the fight against heroin trafficking, Paris organized and hosted in 2003 an international conference on the drug routes from Afghanistan. The Ministers Council confirmed the EU's long-term commitment and decided to dispatch a mission in Afghanistan to assist the police and to contribute to reinforcing the constitutional state.

**In June 2008, Paris hosted a ministerial conference in June 2008**, at which Canada was represented by its then minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. David Emerson. President Nicolas Sarkozy announced an increase of French aid to Afghanistan, which will total 107 million Euros by 2010, mainly for agriculture and health.



A patrol of ISAF French soldiers involved in the surveillance of a school reconstruction in Anjirak

### 4. France has very involved through UN and NATO operations

Altogether, France has 33,000 troops overseas. Out of these troops, 12,500 from all branches and services are deployed in operations. **France is one of the biggest contributors** after the United States in **crisis management missions**. For example:

- France sent troops to **Lebanon** in less than 72 hours. There are now **1,900 French troops** on the ground;

- The presence of France in **Ivory Coast**, with **2,000 troops** in the Licorne Operation and the UN Operation in Ivory Coast, contributes to the stability of West Africa;

- Similarly, in **Chad (1,250 troops)** and **Central Africa (200 troops)**, French troops are a major factor in the stability of a very versatile region. In February 2008,

more than 850 foreigners, including nine Canadians, were able to be evacuated by the French forces during the combats in N'Djamena. In addition, France deployed **1,850 troops as part of the EUFOR in eastern Chad and the Central African Republic**; it also contributes to prevent the spread of the Darfur crisis.

- French troops also have a significant presence in the Balkans: approximately **2,000 troops in Kosovo and 150 in Bosnia**.

**French troops have been involved in most of these places for decades and have paid a high price:** 100 French soldiers lost their lives in the Balkans, more than 100 troops died in Lebanon (58 of them in Beirut on October 23, 1983) and dozens in Africa. In Afghanistan, **26 French troops have been killed** since 2001 and more than a hundred others have been injured./.