



Written by on August 4, 2009

New NATO Chief Outlines Priorities

Speaking to reporters at his first public appearance since assuming his new position as NATO's secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen outlined his priorities on August 3 for reporters. Rasmussen, a former prime minister of Denmark, told reporters that NATO troops would help prevent Afghanistan from "becoming again a grand central station of international terrorism."



An AFP report quoted the new secretary-general's statement that the long-term goal was to "move forward concretely and visibly with transferring lead security responsibility in Afghanistan to the Afghans." "I believe during my term Afghans must take over lead responsibility for security in most of their country," he said. NATO secretaries-general serve four-year terms.

But any suggestion that such a strategy amounted to an abandonment of Afghans by NATO was pure propaganda, he added. "Let me be clear. NATO must and will be there in support. Let no Taliban propaganda try to sell my message as a run for exit. It is not," he said. "We will support the Afghan people as long as it takes."

In addition to NATO's role in Afghanistan, Rasmussen discussed plans to improve relations between the regional defense bloc and Russia. The Chinese news service Xinhua reported that the secretary general said NATO and Russia can work together on terrorism, Afghanistan, piracy, and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

He said differences between NATO and Russia should not poison the whole relationship. "I am not a dreamer. It is obvious that there will be fundamental issues on which we disagree... But we cannot let those areas of disagreement poison the whole relationship," said the new NATO leader. "My message to the Russian leadership and people is clear: let us build trust on cooperation and base our cooperation on shared interests. NATO is really not an enemy of Russia, NATO is not directed against Russia," said Rasmussen.

Perhaps Rasmussen was countering the historic memory of the organization sometimes referred to as the "Atlantic Alliance," which was started in 1949 in the aftermath of World War II with the stated purpose of defending Western Europe against Soviet aggression. The first NATO secretary general, Lord Ismay (who held office from 1952-1957), once stated that the organization's goal was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

The Xinhua report observed that Rasmussen's first practical act as the NATO chief was to appoint a 12-member expert group to work on NATO's new strategic concept, a guideline document for all activities of the organization.



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The British *Guardian* newspaper cited Rasmussen as saying he had asked former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to head a panel of international figures drafting a new strategy document, which is to be ready by a NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010.

The report noted that Albright said in Brussels this month that the new NATO concept should be couched in brief and lucid language, with diplomats and officials emphasizing it should be comprehensible to the "Omaha milkman" — a reference to the goal of the authors of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, on which the alliance is based.

But a senior NATO official disagreed, saying: "A two-page declaration would be useless, like an insurance policy without the fine print."

Rasmussen's selection of former Secretary Albright to head the panel of experts to draft a strategy for NATO — whose most important operation at the present is the war in Afghanistan — mirrors a similar recent occurrence within the U.S. Defense Department that is simply too close to be coincidental.

As we noted in our July 31 article, "[Advisers Call for Afghanistan Troop Buildup](#)," about a dozen members of a "strategic assessment team" recently met in Kabul, Afghanistan, with General Stanley McChrystal, the new U.S. military commander in that nation to complete what was described as a 60-day Afghanistan Review. In calling for the assessment, McChrystal was acting on orders from his superiors in Washington, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen.

The team member who met with McChrystal and was most frequently quoted in the press was Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington, D.C., foreign policy think tank. Cordesman, a Georgetown professor, formerly served as national security assistant to Senator John McCain of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

As we noted in our recent report, the CSIS, described by some as "a CFR [Council on Foreign Relations] front group" has since its inception shared a number of its key leadership personnel with the internationalist CFR. One of its co-founders, Ambassador David Manker Abshire, was a member of both the Council on Foreign Relations and, until his appointment as ambassador to NATO, the globalist Trilateral Commission.

Most pertinent to this discussion, however, is the CSIS membership of Madeline Albright, who also shares CFR membership with many notable CSIS members, including Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, William Cohen, and Brent Scowcroft.

Can it be mere coincidence that the team recently dispatched to Afghanistan to formulate a strategy plan with General McChrystal and the head of the panel drafting a new strategy document for NATO both have a strong CSIS/CFR presence? Probably no more coincidental than the fact that Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who asked General McChrystal for an assessment of the war, and McChrystal, himself, are both CFR members.

Readers new to CFR dominance of U.S. foreign policy may not attribute much significance to the internationalist policy organization's involvement in strategic planning in Afghanistan. However, greater significance is lent to the involvement when it is considered that the CFR also played a major role in implementing U.S. strategy during the war in Vietnam. CFR members who played a significant role during the Vietnam period included Secretary of State Dean Rusk (from 1961 to 1969), Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (from 1961 to 1968), and U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (from 1965 to 1967).



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It is also significant to recall that the legal basis for our involvement in Vietnam was the SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) collective defense treaty, which we signed on September 8, 1954. SEATO — like NATO — was a regional subsidiary of the United Nations. Articles 52 through 54 of the UN Charter grants member states permission to establish "regional arrangements" in order to counter possible aggression. However, so that the UN could retain control of those arrangements, the charter stipulated that every action undertaken by any "regional arrangement" must be "consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations" and that the Security Council must "be kept fully informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements." President Truman cited NATO as his authority to send troops to Korea, and successor presidents pointed to SEATO for their authorization to commit forces to Vietnam.

Once again, we find ourselves involved in a war not by a declaration of war by our Congress, as our Constitution stipulates, but under the auspices of a regional subsidiary of the UN, just as the original invasion of Afghanistan was "authorized" one day after 9/11, when President George W. Bush obtained UN authorization to attack Afghanistan.

Going to war without a congressional declaration, by authority of the UN, under the auspices of a regional subsidiary of the UN, with strategic management conducted by officials who are members of the CFR is like watching a re-run of a very bad old movie. Unfortunately, ending our involvement will not be as simple as switching the channel.

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