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NATO Speeches

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Italy

Statement to the press

9 Feb. 2006

by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer
after the informal meeting of NATO Defence Ministers

NATO Spokesman: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The Secretary General and the Minister will each make brief opening statements. We'll have time for your questions. Secretary General ...

De Hoop Scheffer: Thank you very much. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I can't begin, of course, without first starting to thank very warmly Minister Martino—Antonio, thank you very much—for hosting this meeting in this... on this beautiful island, in this beautiful city.

And I have a second reason to be grateful, because I know that when you look at NATO and when you look at NATO's operations and missions, Italy is omni-present and Italy makes a very important contribution, be it in Afghanistan, be it in Kosovo, be it in the Mediterranean, be it in other operations and missions of NATO. So thank you very much, indeed, for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, it will not come as a surprise to you that an important part of the discussions Ministers just had was focused on Afghanistan. Also on the basis of the events last week in the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh.

I think I should start by saying that Ministers applauded the extreme professionalism and restraint shown by the Norwegian and Finnish troops in that PRT because, of course, it was a serious demonstration. There were very many people outside and relatively little people inside. I think NATO also reacted professionally in sending in reserve forces, so it was in the end a problem which could be solved by NATO, although there were, of course, four casualties. But the professionalism was great.

In this respect, and seeing the developments, it is also crystal clear, and Ministers reconfirmed and reaffirmed that this afternoon, that there is full commitment to take forward ISAF expansion into the southern provinces this summer. Allies have made a long-term commitment to Afghanistan and that commitment will not waver.

As you know, it will take place this summer. It will bring the number of NATO forces and soldiers roughly to 16,000 and it will help the people of Afghanistan to build a better future.

Event

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Multimedia

- Audio file of the statement to the press by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer ([.MP3/2377kb](#)) □

On the basis of the PRT, the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Meymaneh, and what I just told you, it goes without saying that the reasons for the demonstration, the violent demonstration in Meymaneh were also discussed, and if I pick up some key words from that discussion, they would be solidarity from the allies, with our Danish friends, Norwegians and others, who have been victims of violence.

On the other hand, the need for dialogue, the need for respect of each other's values, the need for de-escalation and I think that's... if I see the declaration, the statement made by the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Secretary General Kofi Annan of the UN and the High Representative Solana, the atmosphere that that statement breathes is... was also the atmosphere here this afternoon. I say again, on the basis of solidarity with our Danish and other friends.

It was clear, ladies and gentlemen, that Kosovo was also discussed and the need and the importance in this important period for the province to keep KFOR's presence there and to see that KFOR is able to do everything it can to create a climate of security and stability.

What Ministers also discussed for the longer term was, of course, the way we're going to shape the ISAF expansion. There is a discussion going on, as you know, on financing NATO's operations and financing NATO's missions. In other words, on the relationship between the costs lie where they fall, nations paying, and the principle of common funding. We started that discussion. I tell you again, this is an informal meeting so no decisions were made, but it is a discussion, I think, which we need to have.

That is in brief what I can tell you about the discussion this afternoon. I consider this meeting here in Taormina as one of the building blocks for the summit in Riga.

Some Ministers also started a discussion about what NATO could do more in the framework in the training, because that's what NATO is good at. Ministers discussed, of course, the training mission in Iraq as well and the need to continue this important mission in Iraq. We will continue... we will continue this.

And then I think I have given you an overview of the items discussed. And I look at my friend Antonio Martino.

