

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama, NATO Sign Afghan Power Transfer Plan

By MacKenzie Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama has joined NATO allies in a formal agreement to transfer security control of Afghanistan's 34 provinces to Afghan forces starting in 2011.

Speaking to reporters November 20 in Lisbon, Portugal, at the end of the 2010 NATO Summit, Obama said the transition of security forces would begin in July, with a target of completion by the end of 2014. He said the plan, proposed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai, was endorsed by NATO partners.

"My goal is to make sure that, by 2014, we have transitioned, Afghans are in the lead, and it is a goal to make sure that we are not still engaged in combat operations of the sort that we're involved with now," Obama said.

"Certainly, our footprint will have been significantly reduced. But beyond that, you know, it's hard to anticipate exactly what is going to be necessary," he added.

He said Americans may play an extensive role in training and support in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

Obama added that NATO members have forged a long-term partnership with the Afghan people, leaving "no doubt that as Afghans stand up and take the lead, they will not be standing alone."

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said he did not foresee a combat role for allied forces beyond 2014, "provided, of course, that the security situation allows us to move into a more supportive role."

He said the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force will maintain a military presence in the country beyond 2014, mostly to train Afghan security forces and provide other assistance.

"If the enemies of Afghanistan have the idea that they can just wait it out until we leave, they have the wrong idea. We will stay as long as it takes to finish our job," he said.

The commitment was underscored with a joint partnership declaration, signed by NATO members and Karzai, who took part in the November 20 meeting.

In addition to the new Afghanistan strategy, another key

development of the two-day summit was the signing of a new, 21st-century NATO Strategic Concept, which Obama said will strengthen the ability of partner countries to protect themselves and each other.

The summit also included a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council — the first to be attended by both Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. And at the conclusion of the NATO Summit, Obama joined European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and European Council President Herman Van Rompuy for the 2010 U.S.-EU Summit, which focused attention on the still-recovering world economy, security cooperation and global issues such as Iran, the Middle East peace process and Afghanistan.

## NATO Adopts New Strategic Concept

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama says that the 28-nation NATO alliance has adopted a vision and an approach to collective security for the 21st century that considers such wide-ranging threats as terrorism, cyberattacks and missile attacks.

At a Lisbon press conference, Obama said that "the new Strategic Concept that we are embracing shows that NATO is fully united about the way forward and committing to addressing the full range of security challenges of this century."

The new Strategic Concept — a mission statement and blueprint for the next decade — urges allies to invest in key capabilities to meet emerging threats, and allies agreed to develop within NATO the capabilities necessary to defend against ballistic missile attacks and cyberattacks, Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said November 19 during the 2010 Lisbon Summit.

The 11-page document lays out NATO's vision for an evolving alliance that will remain able to defend its members against modern threats and commits NATO to become highly agile and capable, he added. The previous Strategic Concept was adopted by the alliance during its 50th anniversary at the 1999 Washington NATO Summit.

The Strategic Concept reconfirms the 61-year-old commitment to defend one another against an attack as the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security. The commitment, contained in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Charter, was tested for the first time in the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. NATO provided air surveillance for the United States.

"NATO is an unparalleled community of freedom, peace, security and shared values," Rasmussen said in

announcing the new plan. "But the world is changing. We face new threats and challenges. This Strategic Concept will ensure that NATO remains as effective as ever in defending our peace, our security and our prosperity."

In addition, the concept action plan also commits NATO to reinforce cooperation with Russia. And for the first time, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev met with NATO leaders at the NATO-Russia Council.

The concept also keeps open the door to membership for European democracies, because enlargement of the alliance is seen as contributing to NATO's long-range goal of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace, Rasmussen said.

#### CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Rasmussen said the Strategic Concept highlights the need for NATO to remain ready to play an active role in crisis management operations and to stabilize post-conflict situations, including working more closely with international partners – such as the United Nations and the European Union – whenever it is called to act.

The concept recognizes that crises and conflicts beyond NATO's traditional borders can pose a direct threat to the alliance's security.

"NATO will therefore engage, where possible and when necessary, to prevent crises, manage crises, stabilize post-conflict situations and support reconstruction," the concept paper said.

Lessons learned from NATO operations in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans have made it clear that a comprehensive political, civilian and military approach is necessary for effective crisis management, the document said.

The Strategic Concept also offers a new dimension by permitting alliance partners more political engagement with the NATO alliance members, and a substantial role in helping to shape NATO-led operations to which they contribute.

#### **U.S. Navy Provides Assistance to Iranian Sailors**

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

Washington – U.S. Navy sailors came to the assistance of two stranded Iranian mariners November 18 and provided them with care until they could be picked up by an Iranian coast guard vessel.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the rescue was a normal response by U.S. naval forces and that the

Iranian government had expressed its gratitude for the operation.

"It is something that we do on the high seas ... all the time," Crowley told reporters in Washington November 19.

"Sailors of navies around the world ... respond to distress calls regardless of politics. We were happy to do this," he said, adding, "It's what we do."

He said the Iranian government "acknowledged ... its gratitude for the rescue."

According to a November 18 statement by the U.S. Fifth Fleet, which is based in Bahrain, U.S. naval forces were alerted early that morning that a merchant vessel had seen a flare launched from a life raft. In response, a U.S. Navy destroyer, the USS Oscar Austin, was dispatched to locate the raft.

The two Iranian mariners were found about 1,000 yards (1 kilometer) outside of Iranian territorial waters and were given food and water. An inflatable boat from the Oscar Austin towed the raft closer to the ship "in the event the men required any urgent aid or further assistance," the statement said.

U.S. military personnel contacted the Omani navy to convey the location of the raft to the Iranian coast guard, which sent a search-and-rescue vessel that retrieved the two men. The statement quoted Lieutenant Commander Steve Ansuinni of the Fifth Fleet as saying, "We're glad that we were able to coordinate the rescue of the mariners with the Iranian coast guard."

According to press reports, U.S. sailors previously helped Iranian civilians in August, when an aircraft carrier from the Fifth Fleet rescued eight Iranian fishermen after their boat caught fire.

#### **New York's Little Egypt District Welcomes Arab Immigrants**

By M. Scott Bortot  
Staff Writer

New York – A lot has changed in the neighborhood since Domenico Pinto, owner of Ferrari Driving School, opened his business more than 40 years ago.

"This whole street used to be Italian and Greek," Pinto said, pointing to the stores that line Steinway Street in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens, New York. "Now there are only a couple of Italian places left."

Today, businesses whose owners have ties to other parts of the Mediterranean are taking over. In fact, so many

shops and restaurants owned by Egyptians, Lebanese and Moroccans line Steinway Street between 25th and 28th avenues that the area is known as Little Egypt, and what is unfolding there is another chapter in the ever-changing story of American society.

“Like in the past, you see groups coming into this country because there are economic and social trends in their own countries pushing them out, so to speak, which is why they are looking for opportunities elsewhere,” said Steven Levine, coordinator of educational programs for the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives at LaGuardia Community College in Queens. “New York City, as it has always been since its founding, has been a place where people are coming to look for those opportunities.”

Astoria long has been a neighborhood of immigrants adapting to their new country. First settled by non-natives in the 1650s, the area became a commercial center in the 1800s and attracted German settlers. Among them was the Steinway family, which opened the Steinway & Sons piano factory in the neighborhood in the 1870s.

Following the Germans were Irish, Italian and then Greek immigrants, all of whom still have a presence in Astoria. Most recently, Arabs are making their mark, especially on Steinway Street.

Neighborhood residents and shopkeepers say Ali El Sayed of Egypt was the first when he opened the Kabab Café in 1987. El Sayed was originally from Alexandria, Egypt, with roots in upper Egypt, but he found success on Steinway Street; his restaurant has received favorable reviews from publications including the New York Times.

Like many immigrants, El Sayed chose the United States because he hoped for a better life. He chose Astoria because he could afford it.

“The reason we came to this area is the rent,” El Sayed said as he prepared food at his small restaurant. “I knew that when I opened his place, others would follow because they think their mother’s food would be better and they would try to compete.”

El Sayed’s establishment has been joined by hookah cafés, grocery stores, pastry shops, companies that cater to Arabs, and Islamic fashion stores. The Al-Imam Mosque opened on Steinway Street about a decade ago.

Little Egypt typifies the growth of an American immigrant neighborhood.

Levine said a core of pioneers from one immigrant group will set up shop in a neighborhood, “and the services start to become available for that particular ethnic group.” Those services include ethnic restaurants, grocery stores

that cater to the new neighbors and religious institutions.

El Sayed buys his ingredients fresh daily from neighborhood markets in Astoria. Not only is he a well-recognized chef, he is a bit of a food historian. El Sayed said that kushari – considered by many from the Nile Valley to be a national dish – came to Egypt with workers from India when both countries were ruled by the British.

After work, El Sayed enjoys tea and a hookah pipe with friends across the street at Egypt Café. Among them is Mohsen Badran, who lives in another part of Queens – but started smoking hookahs about four years ago and is drawn to Steinway Street.

“It is good to have conversation with the people here,” Badran said, sipping on a cup of kushari tea (loose tea leaves in a glass). “During the day, you mix with non-Arabs, but when I come here, I meet others to chat and soak in the spirit.”

Badran said living in a neighborhood like Little Egypt can be both positive and negative for new immigrants.

“When someone new comes here, he will not feel strange and not feel like a foreigner because he will learn more about tolerance and integration into the big melting pot,” Badran said. But “if you stay for too long, you don’t go out and see America and the many great things this country has to offer and don’t become more American, which may defeat the purpose of immigration.”

Levine said that, historically, immigrants to America overwhelmingly move on to new frontiers after a stay in a place that reminds them of home.

“Your children are going to start attending schools. You are going to be meeting people from a wide variety of different areas,” Levine said. “There can be a sense of isolation, but the history of it has always been that there has been an adaptation and an integration.”

At one end of the neighborhood, just south of Astoria Boulevard, Egyptian-born Mohammed Saad serves Arab customers at his Ageba grocery and butcher market. Saad has been a neighborhood resident for 11 years and opened Ageba a year ago.

Standing in his store, Saad is flanked by a glass-enclosed, refrigerated case of halal lamb, beef and chicken and another case packed with roudi and istanbouli cheeses from Egypt. One of the biggest draws for customers is the fatayer, layered pastry in a variety of flavors that is baked on site. It reminds Egyptians of life back home.

Just as food draws customers to his shop, Saad said the

use of Arabic in the neighborhood attracts Arabs newly arrived to America.

“At first, English is difficult for them and they stick with the Arabs,” Saad said. “All of those groups gather in their areas because they still speak their language and the language that they have isn’t helpful, so they stay in an area that they know.”

Despite the neighborhood’s cultural cocoon, it remains very much a part of America. Restaurant and café owners said their businesses have suffered through the economic hardships of the past three years. Rents and operating expenses continue to rise, making it tough to do business.

“Everybody is dealing with tough economic times,” El Sayed said. “You are in America, and this is what is happening now.”

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