

# Political decision making of the mission in Uruzgan, a reconstruction

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*NL-ARMS, 2009, 251-276*

## Introduction

On 2 February 2006, after earlier Dutch contributions in Afghanistan, a large parliamentary majority<sup>2</sup> approved the Cabinet decision to deploy a mission to Uruzgan. On 3 February 2006 the decision was confirmed in the meeting of the Cabinet. This brought to a close the political decision making process which had lasted for more than a year and had been fraught with difficulty. It had put great pressure on the relations between the coalition partners CDA, VVD and D66 in the Balkenende II Cabinet, it had led to the departure of D66 chairman of the parliamentary party Boris Dittrich and it signified the beginning of one of the most perilous Dutch missions since WWII.

Why does a decision making process take so much time and why is it so difficult? The purpose of this contribution is to reconstruct the decision making process prior to the mission to Uruzgan.<sup>3</sup> From the first sounding up to the parliamentary debate it is described as completely as possible. The reconstruction is based on a survey of open sources, such as media and parliamentary letters and interviews with persons involved.<sup>4</sup> The article is rounded off with an observation on the reconstruction, followed by conclusions.

## Extension of operations and rapprochement by Canada

On 13 October 2003 the UN Security Council voted for an extension of the mandate of the *International Security and Assistance Force* (ISAF) to the rest of Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> This enabled ISAF, which up to that moment had only been present in Kabul, to expand the operational area to the whole of Afghanistan in four stages. In stage 1 the expansion was to the north, in stage 2 to the west, in stage 3 to the south and, finally, stage 4 to the east.<sup>6</sup>

By the end of 2004 the Netherlands had good experiences with its Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the north of Afghanistan and was considering to establish a second one. Canada, in its turn, was thinking of establishing a PRT in the southern

province of Kandahar. This Canadian idea was brought up on 10 January 2005 in the *Stuurgroep Militaire Operaties* - Steering Group Military Operations (SMO).<sup>7</sup> The Dutch and Canadian considerations seemed to be in line with each other and on 20 January 2005 it could be reported to the SMO that the first contacts between the Netherlands and Canada had taken place. Over the next few weeks these contacts were intensified, while there were also simultaneous contacts with the United Kingdom. On 10 February the Director of Operation of the Defence Staff reported to the SMO that a meeting had taken place with the United Kingdom and Canada with regard to ISAF stage 3 in southern Afghanistan. The three countries were in the process of investigating the possibility to deploy a combined mission in that part of Afghanistan.

### **Motives for the mission**

Both the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs were not against the idea to prepare a mission in southern Afghanistan, although the latter was sceptical at first. The reason for this was that in the spring of 2005 it had been decided that the Netherlands was not going to extend its mission in Iraq. What would the reactions be if the government were to announce it was considering a new mission to southern Afghanistan after the present one? What would the political support be and how would the Dutch population react?<sup>8</sup> Besides, it is worth noting that Foreign Affairs did not wish to commit itself too quickly to the mission; more information was needed for that. Also, Foreign Affairs officials asked themselves what the consequences of 'not going' would be for the Dutch relations with the USA, the United Kingdom and NATO and for the position of the NATO Secretary-General, De Hoop Scheffer.

Within the Ministry of Defence opinions differed on the possible mission. Thus, the *Hoofddirectie Algemene Beleidszaken* - Directorate General Policies (DAB) was on the whole rather reluctant, having doubts about the feasibility and the political consequences of the mission. The Defence Staff, on the other hand, saw the opportunities of the mission for the future of the organisation.

Apart from that, there were different motives for the mission within the organisation. First among them were the possible cuts. The Stabilisation Force Iraq (SFIR) was to end in the spring of 2005, and it was feared that the absence of a new mission would lead to a new rounds of cuts for the Defence organisation once the elections were over. Then, there was the multilateral cadre. Afghanistan had become a test case for NATO, and a failure in that country might have negative consequences for NATO as an organisation and for transatlantic relations, two aspects of which the Netherlands had always been

strong proponents. What is more, the war against international terrorism and the support of the Afghan population were in line with the foreign policy of the Balkenende II Cabinet.<sup>9</sup> Fourth, the Defence organisation was convinced of the leverage the Dutch contribution might have in the international arena.<sup>10</sup> Taking part in the mission in southern Afghanistan would enhance Dutch influence on the international level. Finally, there was the experience for the armed forces. After the end of the Cold War the ministry had been subjected to a great many cuts and re-organisations, in the course of which the military machine had been transformed from a force destined for the North-German plain into expeditionary armed forces. The Services had already gained experience in the 1990s and the beginning of the present century in various missions in the former Yugoslavia and Iraq, but the mission in southern Afghanistan was to be the “toughest mission since Korea”. Not only would the Netherlands become responsible for one of the southern provinces, it would also take turns in commanding the entire operation in southern Afghanistan. Surely, this would be a good experience for the armed forces.

For the then Minister of Defence, Kamp, the elections did not play a role, which set him somewhat apart from a number of other functionaries within the Ministry. After the 9/11 attacks not only the Taliban rule must be toppled and Al Qaida hounded out, but also the Afghan population must be given a good alternative. For him, these had been the reasons why the Netherlands had contributed to earlier missions in Afghanistan, and Kamp's reason for taking part in the southern Afghanistan mission lay in the fact that his country had committed itself to the necessity of the reconstruction of Afghanistan. This would be a difficult job to achieve in southern Afghanistan, but the Netherlands had an expeditionary force which was top of the bill. The country had the ability to take part, and in view of earlier statements, had committed itself to. Any electoral motives were rejected by Kamp.<sup>11</sup> Foreign Affairs was not impressed by the ‘experience argument’ of Defence as a motive for taking part in such a mission. Apart from that, it had a number of similar but also different reasons.

First of all, there were geo-political reasons. The mission in Iraq, especially in southern Iraq, was going rather well in the spring of 2005. Foreign Affairs was of the opinion that if by a multinational effort two democratic poles (Iraq and Afghanistan) could be created, this would have a positive impact on the neighbouring countries and the entire region (Iran, Pakistan). The second reason (the war against international terrorism) and the third (leverage) Foreign Affairs shared with Defence.

The same seems to have been the case with the fourth motive, the multinational character, but only for a different reason. For Defence NATO was a prime reason, for Foreign Affairs it was mainly important that the mission was carried out with countries such as

the United Kingdom and Canada, countries of great international stature. It would give the Netherlands an opportunity to create a profile for itself internationally, project the country into the 'major league of countries', to improve its international position and increase its influence. All this would enhance the above-mentioned leverage.

Finally, Foreign Affairs shared a number of motives with Minister Kamp, in that it, too, saw the mission in southern Afghanistan as a logical consequence of earlier efforts in other parts of the country. Besides, the Netherlands had the ability to carry out the mission and therefore could suit the action to the word.

### **The start of the political decision making**

On 3 May 2005 Prime Minister Balkenende, Minister Kamp and Minister Bot meet at the Ministry of Defence in order to be briefed on the state of affairs, after which the involved ministries could continue their preparations for the time being.

On 24 May 2005 there was another meeting of the involved ministers and civil servants on the possibility of a mission to southern Afghanistan. The outcome of the consultation was not clear, no unequivocal yes, nor a cancellation. Again, the ministries involved could continue making their preparations. At the same time, it was decided that Minister Bot will sound out the D66 and PvdA with regard to their possible support for a mission to southern Afghanistan. It was decided to do this as a result of the experiences with a mission of 250 personnel, mainly special forces of the *Korps Commando Troepen* and *Korps Mariniers* – Commando Corps and Marine Corps, to Afghanistan within the framework of *Operation Enduring Freedom*. On 25 February 2005 Minister Bot and Minister Kamp had sent a notification about that mission to Second Chamber and on 10 March 2005 a debate had taken place on the matter. Although the mission had been supported by a large majority in the Second Chamber, it had been somewhat painful that the PvdA had been against it.<sup>12</sup> The ministers involved wanted to prevent such an experience with the upcoming mission and that is why the two opposition parties were sounded out. To the surprise of various policy officials both D66 and PvdA agreed with the plan.<sup>13</sup>

With so much support from Prime Minister Balkenende and the Ministers Bot and Kamp the mission was given a provisional 'green light' during a meeting on 8 June, which meant that the preparations could continue. On 14 June 2005 a team of Defence and Foreign Affairs officials left for a Fact Finding Mission (FFM) to Afghanistan, led by the J5 (planning) of the *Directie Operatiën* - Operations Directorate of the Defence staff. One of the objectives of this FFM was to determine in which province the Netherlands

wanted and would be able to make an effort. In the first instance, the preference of the Netherlands was for the province of Kandahar, which had a good airfield and a base to operate from. Besides, the Netherlands began to be familiar with the province due to the presence of its special forces there. However, Kandahar was in Canadian hands by now and Canada wanted to continue its efforts in this province. It soon became clear that the United Kingdom had a strong preference for Helmand, and on top of that, the Netherlands saw that this province was a bit too much for its level of ambition. The province of Day Khundi was only accessible in summer and if Uruzgan was not occupied by a coalition partner, there would remain a 'gap' between the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar and Day Khundi, which was an undesirable option. The Netherlands considered for a long time to make an offer for Nimroz, the province west of Helmand, which offered good opportunities for reconstruction projects. However, the need in Uruzgan was direct (from a reconstruction as well as a counter-insurgency perspective), which finally tipped the balance for Uruzgan.<sup>14</sup> Incidentally, an eye witness on a visit to the ISAF headquarters in Kabul noticed that a Dutch flag had been placed in Uruzgan on the map of Afghanistan. It is not clear whether this was wishful thinking or prescience.<sup>15</sup>

On 16 June, two days after the departure of the FFM, Minister Kamp sent a letter to Parliament on the NATO-defence ministers' meeting of 9 and 10 June 2005 in Brussels. In broad lines the letter described what had been discussed at that meeting. At the same time the following text had been incorporated, also on behalf of Minister Bot, "in response to a request of the NATO Secretary General (I) have announced that the Netherlands is going to investigate a contribution, in cooperation with the United Kingdom and Canada, and possibly other partners, to the extension of ISAF to the south of Afghanistan (stage 3)".<sup>16</sup> With this *notification* the Second Chamber was informed for the first time about the plans for a mission to southern Afghanistan. Afterwards there was criticism about the way of informing, with MPs complaining that the notification had been smuggled away in a letter on a NATO meeting.

### **The mission is becoming uncertain**

At the NATO meeting of 9 and 10 June in Brussels, mentioned above, Canada, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands brought forward their plans for southern Afghanistan. At the same time the Netherlands indicated there that it needed a partner for this effort. This partner was found in Australia, which had been persuaded into cooperating with the Netherlands through mediation of the USA and the United Kingdom.<sup>17</sup> This had and has several advantages for the Netherlands. First of all, Australia was already active in Uruzgan with special forces within the OEF framework, which meant

it had the knowledge that the Netherlands lacked. Apart from that, Australia has modern armed forces, which is important for interoperability.

Altogether the preparations for the mission went relatively well and by the end of September or early October 2005<sup>18</sup> Prime Minister Balkenende and the Ministers Bot and Kamp made a decision in principle. The Netherlands was to take part in the ISAF mission in Uruzgan, on condition of parliamentary approval, a decision which was announced to NATO Secretary General De Hoop Scheffer.

However, in spite of this decision in principle, the mission seemed to have become increasingly uncertain in the course of the autumn of 2005, due to a number of mutually reinforcing developments. Thus, on 19 October the *Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst* – Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD), released a very critical report, portraying a sombre picture of the province of Uruzgan. It stated that reconstruction activities would be severely hampered by the presence of Opposing Militant Forces (OMF), and, on top of that, it was to be expected that there would be Dutch casualties.<sup>19</sup>

Besides, from 18 until 20 October the Plaatvervangend Commandant der Strijdkrachten - Deputy Armed Forces Commander (PCDS), the Directeur-Generaal Politieke Zaken – Director General Political Affairs (DGPZ) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil servants of both ministries made a visit to Afghanistan. The visit went well, but ended in doubts, when the Australians kept on saying that, however well intended the mission was, or however well the hearts and minds campaign would go, the population of Uruzgan would never choose the side of the coalition troops.

Moreover, on 27 October 2005 the Commandant der Strijdkrachten – the Armed Forces Commander (CDS) presented his military advice to the Minister of Defence. He described the mission as challenging, but feasible and sound, an assessment that seemed to be at odds with the critical MIVD report.<sup>20</sup> Finally, there were (and are) proponents and opponents of the mission within Defence, the latter having reservations with regard to the feasibility of the mission, or fearing the Netherlands might have bitten off more than it could chew.<sup>21</sup>

In the media the impression began to emerge that there were serious doubts about whether the mission would go on, with Foreign Affairs allegedly being reluctant, Minister Kamp being in two minds about pushing the mission through or not, and Prime Minister Balkenende also being hesitant.<sup>22</sup> A quote from *De Volkskrant* of 29 December 2005 is a good illustration of the media coverage in this period:

*Armed with the information from his servicemen, Kamp decided, shortly before a working visit to Afghanistan, to report to the Council of Ministers on 28 October. His CDA colleague Bot saw the storm coming. For months, his diplomats, just like Kamp's soldiers, had been meeting NATO allies and other countries on the Afghanistan mission, but there were so many uncertainties according to Bot that the subject was not yet ripe for discussion in the Cabinet. The fact that Kamp, at first a strong proponent of the mission, was hesitating, might force the Cabinet into making a premature negative decision. In that case Bot would have some explaining to do abroad. Confusion was rife, also with Balkenende, who asked both ministers for an explanation. MPs had the impression that Kamp wanted to force a positive decision, and they reproved him for "marching in front of his troops". He was also blamed for losing sight of the fact that Bot would be the first person responsible for sending out troops. Kamp found this criticism hard to stomach. When a few weeks later he saw his colleague Bot at a EU meeting, he slipped, "There's my boss". It would be as late as December before both ministers presented a unanimous proposal to the Council of Ministers.*

On 28 October 2005 it did not come to a forced decision in the Council of Ministers, but the differences of opinion between Kamp and Bot found their way to the media.<sup>23</sup> An example of this is the discussion on the 'ironmonger's'. *De Volkskrant* of 30 October 2005 published an article entitled *Bot doet het beleid, Kamp de ijzerwinkel* (Bot takes care of policy, Kamp watches over the ironmonger's), in which it was stated that Kamp moved too much on the policy domain of Foreign Affairs not only because of his stance in the Uruzgan mission, but also because of his preference for the acquisition of Tomahawk missiles for the Royal Netherlands Navy. Minister Kamp reacted on 31 October 2005 at a meeting of his party, stating that he found it "revolting" that the armed forces were dubbed "the ironmonger's" at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>24</sup> GroenLinks MP Karimi asked parliamentary questions "on the reports in the media to the effect that there are differences of opinion with regard to a new military mission in Afghanistan".<sup>25</sup> Bot and Kamp felt obliged to send a parliamentary letter in which they stated that "there is no question of any difference of opinion between us".<sup>26</sup>

There are various versions with regard to the doubts, each with its own perspective on the 'truth'. Thus, former minister Kamp acknowledges that he had certain doubts about the mission, but he indicates that this is understandable. Certain aspects required further clarification and a number of conditions still needed to be met. In contrast to his usual habit, Kamp drew up a list of requirements that the mission had to meet and had it circulated in his ministry.<sup>27</sup> Incidentally, he denies that there was a big competition between the various factions within his ministry. In his view, not everyone was a proponent in equal measure of the mission and there were legitimate doubts about its

feasibility, but due to a transparent decision making process in various phases, everyone saw the possibilities of the mission.<sup>28</sup>

At the Ministry of General Affairs there were also different currents of proponents and opponents, each exerting its influence on Prime Minister Balkenende. Opponents feared a 'headache mission', while proponents, on the other hand, saw the chances such a mission would bring along. Prime Minister Balkenende, in the mean time, had begun to have serious doubts about the mission, in particular because of the lack of support in the Second Chamber, but also because of the risks attached to it.<sup>29</sup>

At Foreign Affairs, too, the doubts were seen from different angles. For some the doubts meant possible 'showstoppers' for the mission, while for others they stemmed from problems that had not been solved yet. If those problems disappeared, the doubts would be taken away, too. For them, the decision in principle was clear, the mission would go on, and problems were merely obstacles that needed to be taken away and not reasons for reconsidering the mission.

From 31 October until 2 November 2005 Minister Kamp paid a visit to Afghanistan and also the special forces in Kandahar, during which he was given a briefing on Uruzgan by the Americans. On his return, the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence formulated a list, based on Kamp's list of requirements mentioned above, of 16 points for improvement with regard to the mission that needed to be dealt with in order to get approval.<sup>30</sup> In drawing up the list, the question was asked which points of criticism on the mission would come from the Second Chamber and which would come from the media. This criticism, subsequently, had to be prevented by 'fixing' it.

One of the points for improvement was how to deal with the special forces under the OEF mandate and the Task Force under the ISAF mandate. How were these two missions to be related and tuned with each other? The answer was found in the transfer of the special forces to the ISAF Task Force, which took away one of the points for improvement at an early stage and reduced the list to 15.

### **The mood becoming more positive**

Together, Foreign Affairs and Defence tried to take away the remaining 15 'obstacles', with little result at first. Thus, the American Secretary of State Rice did not want to make many concessions in a telephone conversation with her colleague Bot.<sup>31</sup>



Gradually, things began to improve, albeit erratically. On 14 November Bot had a meeting with President Karzai in Vienna, during which Karzai made a number of concessions with regard to the strengthening of the structure of authority, the local police forces, the presence of the Afghan army in Uruzgan and a proper treatment of prisoners. A week later the mood was becoming negative again when VVD foreign affairs parliamentary spokesman Van Baalen in a debate on the budget of Foreign Affairs on 23 and 24 November 2005 voiced criticism with regard to the respecting of the international rule of law within the framework of the human rights violations in Afghanistan.<sup>32</sup> He stated, "The VVD party (...), too, holds that international law should be the measure of things for the Second Chamber. If in certain missions international law is not respected, the VVD party will certainly not give its automatic support to them."<sup>33</sup> In order to lend his words more weight, Van Baalen proposed a motion, requesting the government, in case of extensions of current operations or considering new ones, to investigate expressly whether it was possible to act in conformity with international law and to inform Parliament about this, thereby taking into account the mission/operation in its entirety, and not just the Dutch share in it.<sup>34</sup> From an unexpected corner the Parliamentary support seemed to become even smaller.

In a reaction Minister Bot stated that he was negotiating with Afghanistan on Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) about the prisoners and the death penalty.<sup>35</sup> These negotiations were a direct consequence of the meeting Minister Bot had with Karzai in Vienna on 14 November 2005.

In spite of the earlier agreement in principle on the mission of the ministers involved and the attempts at taking away the obstacles to that mission, there seemed to be doubt throughout. Prime Minister Balkenende hesitated because of the lack of support from the Second Chamber. The *Reformatisch Dagblad* reported on 29 November 2005, "The PvdA, GroenLinks and SP are against the mission. But also CDA and D66 have major reservations. The time may not be right just yet for a mission of the international ISAF force in Uruzgan", says D66 MP Bakker. "Perhaps it would be wise if the Cabinet postponed the decision for a few months". Of the coalition parties perhaps the VVD seemed to be most in favour of the operation, which was to start in June the next year. VVD MP Van Baalen made it known on Tuesday (29 November 2005) that in principle his party was for sending our troops to the area, "on condition that the security risks are acceptable and that there are clear agreements of prisoners. For us it is not 'no, unless, but yes, if'".

Minister Kamp's doubt had not been taken away yet and Minister Bot still had a number of questions. Thus, the latter wanted security guarantees for the troops from

the United States, a demand that was at first rejected (the US did not want to keep troops in reserve to be able to come to the assistance of the Dutch). Besides, Bot wanted some explanations on alleged CIA prisons and the humanitarian law of armed conflict. In short, the media reported of a Cabinet that was leaning towards a 'no' for the Afghanistan mission, although none of the ministers involved had made any public statements against the mission.<sup>36</sup>

In the mean time, the pressure on the Netherlands to agree to the mission began to increase. Members of Parliament took offence at the appeal of the NATO Secretary General De Hoop Scheffer, urging the Netherlands to make haste with its decision to send troops to southern Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup>

On 30 November 2005 the American Under Secretaries Florey (Defense) and Fried (State) visited the Netherlands to discuss the mission. According to an eyewitness of Foreign Affairs, the mood at the beginning of the day was pessimistic at the Ministry; the mission had little chance of success. Due to the talks with the Under Secretaries the mood began to shift towards a more optimistic one in the course of the day, and confidence was growing. In the first instance, there had been no plans for a meeting of Minister Bot and the two under secretaries, but as a result of the positive developments a meeting took place after all in the evening of 30 November 2005.<sup>38</sup> The CDS was not present during this meeting, as he had left for Brussels to discuss the day's results with NATO Commander-in-Chief, General Jones.<sup>39</sup>

The combined approach of Foreign Affairs and Defence seemed to be successful, and point by point the 15-point list was tackled. On 8 December 2005 Minister Bot, on his return from a NATO meeting in Brussels, was convinced of the mission. He was satisfied with the statements of the American Secretary of State Rice on the treatment of persons suspected of terrorism. He also got sufficient guarantees for support from allies in case Dutch troops might be endangered. "I feel comfortable, both with regard to the protection of Dutch troops and the treatment of Afghan prisoners, in defending a defence mission within the Dutch government".<sup>40</sup> Finally, for all 15 remaining points an adequate settlement was agreed on, with the exception of the American troops in Zabul. Instead of a complete battle group, the USA were to stay there with a company.<sup>41</sup>

In the mean time, the mission had come up for discussion in the Council of Ministers of 2 December 2005 and was put on the agenda for the Council of Ministers of 9 December. On that day the CDS presented the mission, supported by ministers Kamp and Bot. Because of the discussion on the rocketing energy prices (compensation for minimum wage earners for the risen energy prices) and the criticism of, in particular

Minister Pechtold, on the tardy information about the mission, there was no decision that day. In a press meeting after the Council of Minister meeting Prime Minister Balkenende stated that “carefulness outweighs haste”.<sup>42</sup> On 19 December 2005 the mission would be up for discussion again.

In the same period the political parties were briefed at the Ministry of Defence on the mission to Uruzgan. On 16 December 2005 the D66 party was briefed by the CDS and the Hoofdirecteur Algemene Beleidszaken – Head Director General Policies of the Ministry of Defence, drs. L. Casteleijn. Already prior to his visit to Defence for the briefing D66 party leader Dittrich had made an appointment with RTL-4 television channel.<sup>43</sup> Immediately after the briefing he made a statement for the channel that D66 was against the mission.<sup>44</sup>

The political reaction was somewhat late in coming, for as it happened precisely on this day all MPs were at a reception at the occasion of the silver jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix at Paleis Noordeinde. In the palace there were provisions which make the use of cell-phones impossible. Only after the reception did the MPs find out what Dittrich had said in his statement. It was a bomb shell.<sup>45</sup>

The rejection brought the D66 ministers in the Cabinet, Pechtold and Brinkhorst, and with them the Cabinet, in an awkward position. Precisely at the moment the Netherlands had got concessions from Afghanistan and other allies, and the doubt of the ministers involved had dissipated, Dittrich caused a lot of commotion even before a Cabinet decision on the mission. If the D66 ministers voted in line with the party against the mission, the Netherlands would have some explaining to do internationally and this might have consequences for the Cabinet, which might well find itself projected into a crisis. At the same time, if Pechtold and Brinkhorst voted for the mission, this would mean a rupture in the party.<sup>46</sup>

PvdA party leader Wouter Bos was surprised and expected the Cabinet not to make a proposal to Parliament. In response to a question of a NOS reporter if now the conclusion was justified that the mission was off the table, Bos said, “That seems to me to be the only correct conclusion”.<sup>47</sup> At Foreign Affairs, too, the policy officials were convinced the mission is over.<sup>48</sup> Prime Minister Balkenende made it known through his spokesperson, that, “On Monday (19 December 2005) the Cabinet will make up the balance. Then it will weigh up the facts and arguments”.<sup>49</sup> NATO Secretary General expressed the hope that the Cabinet would take a positive decision after all on 19 December and, in doing so, increased the pressure.<sup>50</sup>

## 22 December 2005, a Cabinet intention reached

On 19 December, too, the Cabinet did not take a decision, as Minister Brinkhorst had not returned yet from a working visit to Hong Kong. The following day there were frantic attempts at finding a solution. On 21 December Ministers Kamp, Bot, Pechtold and Brinkhorst meet in the office of the latter. The mission was again on the agenda for 22 December. It is customary that on the evening prior to a Council of Ministers the so-called *Bewindspersonenoverleg* (BPO) – Policymakers’ meeting<sup>51</sup> takes place, and so it was this evening. Bot tried to massage the D66 ministers into agreeing to the mission. He understood the position they were in and made the suggestion to change the word ‘decision’ in the article 100-letter to ‘intention’. The D66 ministers agreed and the article 100-letter was changed accordingly on the spot.<sup>52</sup>

This meant that the D66 ministers took up a position which was diametrically opposed to their own party, which, even after the BPO did not intend to change its position. Minister Pechtold said about this situation: “This is the point of view of the party and tomorrow the Cabinet will take a decision on the matter”. After the meeting D66 MP Bakker stated that the Cabinet “has its own responsibility. It may well be that in the coming weeks and months there will be plenty of debate, also in the Chamber, and I have no problem with that whatsoever”.<sup>53</sup>

With that the sky seemed to have cleared, and on 22 December after the Council of Ministers, Parliamentary Document 27 925, no. 194 was sent to the Second Chamber. In it the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence and Overseas Development stated that, “As per attached letter (Parliamentary Document 27 925, no. 193) the Government informs you with regard to its intended contribution the ISAF in southern Afghanistan. In doing so, the Government is acting in conformity with article 100 of the Constitution and is line with the points of attention of the *Toetsingskader 2001*<sup>54</sup>’.<sup>55</sup> In the letter the political desirability and military feasibility of the mission was formulated in conformity with the ‘*Toetsingskader 2001*’.<sup>56</sup>

Although the ‘intention’ proved to be a good idea to keep the D66 ministers on board, it met with much criticism from the Second Chamber. Van Baalen (VVD) demanded an explanation from the Cabinet: “Is this is decision or an intention? The Cabinet is ambivalent on this.”<sup>57</sup> MP Koenders (PvdA) in a first reaction took an advance on the stalemate that was going to develop between Parliament and government, “there is no such thing as an intention to a decision in our book. The Chamber cannot debate about a decision that does not exist”.<sup>58</sup>

The Parliamentary questions on 'intention' or 'decision' forced the ministers involved to send another letter to the Chamber in which they tried to explain that the Cabinet had taken a decision without using that word: "By sending this article 100-letter the government makes clear that it has the intention of taking part in this operation".<sup>59</sup> The Second Chamber did not accept this, and in particular VVD, PvdA, SP and D66 refused to discuss the content of the article 100-letter before the Cabinet had taken a decision.

This was not the only political problem the Cabinet had to deal with. On the recommendation of MP Ormel the CDA party attached a condition to the mission: the support of a two-thirds majority, a move which in fact made the whole project dependent on the approval of the PvdA party.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, there were the problems with D66. Although the 'intention' had made an article 100-letter possible, the division within the party had not been resolved yet. In fact, it was further sharpened by an interview with MP Bakker in *Elsevier*, in which he stated loud and clear that D66 was and remained against a third mission in Afghanistan: "Either the Cabinet reconsiders and decides not to go, or the Cabinet cannot find a solution and the whole blows up in its face".<sup>61</sup> Party leader Dittrich did not want to use the crisis word and also D66 minister Brinkhorst thought it "nonsense" to speak of the fall of the Cabinet: "This Cabinet has to go on, this is the year to harvest".<sup>62</sup>

On 13 January the ministers involved sent a Parliamentary letter, in which the Cabinet again tried to explain that it had taken a decision on the sending out of troops to southern Afghanistan, once again without mentioning the word 'decision': "the willingness to take part in ISAF in southern Afghanistan, which was decided on before".<sup>63</sup> In the view of the Second Chamber the Cabinet still had not taken a decision, but it was conscious of the time pressure for the mission and it decided to discuss the letter. "We have to. The matter is too important. The Chamber now takes the matter into its own hands", said MP Koenders after the debate on 13 January 2006.<sup>64</sup>

There was, however, one passage in the letter that was new. "With the letter of 22 December last and the letter of 27 December last the government has indicated that after the formation of judgement by your Chamber on the intended deployment, it will consider what the consequences will be of that parliamentary judgement".<sup>65</sup> It seemed that with this the decision lay with the Parliament instead of the government; in any case, that was the way this was interpreted by PvdA and VVD.<sup>66</sup>

In the procedural meeting of 17 January 2006 the way in which the mission would be discussed was established. In the period between 22 December 2005 and 17 January

2006 the parties in the Chamber voiced their wishes with regard to that procedure. In any case there was to be a round of written questions, a hearing and a confidential briefing before an *Algemeen Overleg* –General Consultation could be held. Apart from that, a visit to Afghanistan and even Uruzgan was an option.<sup>67</sup> The parties also voiced their preferences for who should be heard at the hearing. In the procedural meeting it was eventually decided that there would be a round of written questions first, followed by the hearing on 30 January. The General Consultation was to take place on 2 February, during which the Vaste Commissies - Permanent Commissions for Foreign Affairs and Defence would debate in two terms with the ministers, followed by a plenary meeting in the third term.

Earlier that day Minister Kamp had let it be known in a Parliamentary letter that he was not prepared to grant leave to inspect the MIVD report, though he offered to have the MPs briefed by the CDS and the MIVD Director.<sup>68</sup> The Permanent Commissions did not accept this and in the procedural meeting they reiterated their request to be allowed to inspect the MIVD report and the advice of the CDS.<sup>69</sup> Finally, on 25 January 2006 Minister Kamp relented and he had the MIVD report sent to the Chamber. At the same time, he gave permission to the party spokespersons to inspect them. Parts of the report had been blacked out.<sup>70</sup> On 26 January the CDS and the MIVD Director gave a confidential briefing to the Foreign Affairs Permanent Commission in the presence of Minister Kamp. On 30 January the slides of the presentation were sent for perusal to the Second Chamber and inspection by the party spokespersons.<sup>71</sup>

Not only the procedure of the decision making is subject of discussion, but also the content of the decision, the mission to Uruzgan itself is brought into the limelight. In the article 100- letter of 22 December 2005 the ministers involved try to portray a balanced picture of the mission, giving attention to reconstruction, but also to the importance of security and the risks attached to the mission. The objective of the mission is the support and strengthening of the Afghan authorities, enabling them to guarantee security and stability in their own country in due course. “In line with the ISAF mandate the Dutch detachment will focus on enhancing stability and security by increasing the support of the local population for the Afghan authorities, and decreasing the support for the Taliban and associated groups. Fostering good governance, efficient police and armed forces, enhancing the constitutional state, the execution of CIMIC and reconstruction activities, and the stimulation of reconstruction activities by others are important elements of this approach”.<sup>72</sup> It is also stressed that it is a mission with “real military risks”, in which “spectacular results will not really be very visible from the beginning, but will take some time”.<sup>73</sup> In spite of the intended balanced picture in the article 100-letter, the aspect that most catches the imagination after the conclusion of the decision making

process on 3 February 2006 is the reconstruction, not least because of the importance and expected success the Second Chamber attributes to reconstruction and the way this is expressed in the media (by the media, the MPs as well as the ministers).<sup>74</sup> This leads to recurrent criticism of the mission during its actual execution, in particular during intensive periods in which there is much fighting. Is this a reconstruction mission or a fighting mission?

In the mean time, the developments in the Netherlands were followed closely. On 9 January 2006 Paul Bremer III (American former administrator in Iraq and US ambassador in the Netherlands from 1983-1986) stated in *De Volkskrant* that a Dutch pull-out would not be without consequences. These tough words were quickly contradicted by the American top diplomat Kurt Volker,<sup>75</sup> when he declared that Washington did “not exert any pressure”, and that the Netherlands would not be punished for a possible ‘no’. “If the Netherlands does not join in the mission, NATO will have to find another partner willing to take up the burden”, Volker says on 17 January. He also indicated that Bremer III did not speak any longer on behalf of the American government.<sup>76</sup> On 10 January the American Under Secretary of State, Daniel Fried, expressed his surprise at what he called “the overheated debate in the Netherlands on the intended sending of troops to Afghanistan”.<sup>77</sup>

Media abroad, too, reported on the decision making. The Dutch hesitations met with criticism from the USA. Vance Serchuk of the *American Enterprise Institute* derided the Netherlands for its indecision, “The Netherlands’ skittishness makes for an important cautionary tale not only about the near-farcical indecision of a European ally in the war on terror, but more important, the risks inherent in outsourcing ever-greater responsibility for Afghanistan to NATO”.<sup>78</sup> The *Financial Times* made a connection with the future of NATO: “NATO’s future credibility is now in Dutch hands”.<sup>79</sup> William Pfaff of *The International Herald Tribune* was also of the opinion that the future of NATO was at stake. “Whether the Dutch realize it or not, the future of both NATO and Afghanistan may be what their Parliament really will be debating”.<sup>80</sup> Constanze Stelzenmuller, NATO expert of the *German Marshall Fund of the United States* understood the criticism: “It is all about credibility of western interventions in general. The Dutch have a reputation of being pragmatic, good soldiers and friends of the United States. When the Dutch pull out now, this will create a feeling that something is wrong - not only with NATO but also with the political alliance of which NATO is the military arm”.<sup>81</sup>

On 30 January 2006 the public hearing took place. From 08:30 hrs until 22:00 hrs the MPs could question experts.<sup>82</sup> The hearing was organised by the ministers involved, but in the preparation phase the Second Chamber had had the opportunity of propos-

ing experts for the hearing. The ministers involved believed that the hearing was a good opportunity of changing PvdA's thoughts for the better and of increasing the support for the mission in society.<sup>83</sup> In spite of the fact that the Second Chamber had had the possibility to influence the programme, there was criticism afterwards on the hearing, which was felt to have been too one-sided and uncritical. The choice of speakers was supposed to have influenced the setting, and with it the outcome of the hearing.<sup>84</sup>

On the same day UN Secretary General Kofi Annan paid a visit to the Netherlands, and after his meeting with Prime Minister Balkenende the SG used the opportunity to publicly express his hope that, "the Dutch Parliament will take the right decision on the sending of troops to Afghanistan".<sup>85</sup> Besides, the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, announced on this day that Australia is considering sending a reconstruction force.<sup>86</sup> Australia is the country that was mentioned in the article 100- letter: "the Netherlands will cooperate with a solid, military relevant partner in Uruzgan".<sup>87</sup>

On 31 January 2006, the day after the hearing, PvdA party leader Wouter Bos stated that, "it is clear that the Cabinet is moving in the right direction with regard to a number of demands that we (PvdA) have made",<sup>88</sup> pointing at the separation of ISAF and OEF. He stated the information given during the CDS and MIVD Director's briefing and the hearing "(has made) it easier for us to make a judgement on whether the objectives of the mission can be realised".<sup>89</sup> Although Bos still remarked that the final judgement would be made on 2 February 2006, the support for the mission in the Parliament seemed to be growing considerably.

On 1 February 2006 the Permanent Commissions for Foreign Affairs and Defence was given a confidential briefing on the Rules of Engagement (RoE) of the Dutch troops. They were also promised they would be granted perusal of the Aide Memoire and the violence instruction card (translations of the RoE to the commander level and soldier level, respectively). Apart from that the commissions requested perusal of the Rules of Engagement specified by NATO for ISAF III. Finally, on 8 February 2006 the commissions had a confidential perusal of the information in the specified documents.<sup>90</sup>

On 2 February the Permanent Commissions for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Overseas Development met in two terms in the General Consultation. In the first term it emerged that CDA supported the mission because of the necessary reconstruction. PvdA indicated it would approve the mission provided a number of conditions were met, the most important of which was the separation of ISAF and OEF. The VVD stated that the military operation in Uruzgan was a feasible one: "The military conditions for the successful execution of this mission are met, as far as my party is concerned",<sup>91</sup> said



party spokesman Van Baalen. The earlier criticism concerning the human rights and the international rule of law (voiced during the budgetary debate of Foreign Affairs on 23 and 24 November 2005) had been taken away during the CDS and MIVD Director's briefing. The SP indicated that the party could not support this mission, consistent with its refusal to support the earlier mission in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although GroenLinks had supported the previous missions in Afghanistan, it would not do so with this mission, as the security situation in Uruzgan would prevent the Dutch mission from realising the desired reconstruction. Incidentally, the party announced that on the closure of Guantánamo Bay the mission would get the support of GroenLinks.<sup>92</sup> For the LPF the nature and size of the mission was not consistent with the size of the Dutch armed forces, and that is why the party was for the mission, provided that it was limited to one year, with an option of one more year. D66 had no other option than sticking to its earlier standpoint. Finally, the smaller parties, such as Christen Unie, SGP, Groep Wilders, and Groep Nawijn announced they would support the mission. In the first term the ministers reacted to questions and remarks of the parties. In a short second term there was another exchange of ideas, after which the positions seemed definite, except for the PvdA's.<sup>93</sup>

Between the General Consultation and the plenary debate, which was to take place on the same day, the PvdA had an extra party meeting. Most parties had already held such a meeting to determine the party standpoint on 31 January. During the meeting on 2 February party leader Bos and party spokesman Koenders persuaded the MPs to agree to the mission.<sup>94</sup>

During the plenary debate in the third term there was no vote, the parties only stating whether they gave their approval or not. As expected CDA, VVD, and LPF agreed to the mission, where LPF dropped its demand of the mission only being limited to one year and agreed to a two-year mission. To the relief of the Cabinet the same held for the PvdA, which created so much support in the Second Chamber that the opposition of SP, GroenLinks and of course D66 had become irrelevant. The Marijnissen, Halsema and Dittrich motion of party leaders of SP, GroenLinks and D66, respectively<sup>95</sup> got little support.<sup>96</sup>

## Observations

What is remarkable about this reconstruction? First, it can be said that the decision making process took a long time, with the first talks having begun in January 2005 between Canada and the Netherlands, and the final decision reached on 3 February

2006. The Tijdelijke Commissie Buitenlandse Uitzendingen – Temporary Committee Missions Abroad (TCBU) studied the decision making of the Dutch missions between 1991 and 1999. The duration of the decision making processes of the 18 missions under investigation usually varies between several weeks to nine months, the majority taking three to four months.<sup>97</sup> The decision making for Uruzgan, taking more than a year, seems to be an exception, but what does this say about the decision making? Missions, and the decision making leading up to them, cannot easily be compared. A decision making process lasts as long as it needs. On the one hand, it can be explained as the period a government needs for preparations and the negotiations that come with a decision making, while, on the other hand, it can be seen as the period a decision making is allowed to last. A humanitarian disaster requires quicker action and therefore quicker decision making than, for instance, intervention in Iraq. Incidentally, the situation in Sudan, for instance, shows that this is only relative.

Second, the respondents indicate that the process went relatively well in their eyes. The position of Foreign Affairs as opposed to Defence, and, vice versa, was described as ‘tough but fair’. In general, the cooperation went well, according to the respondents, and in the light of the Dutch 3D approach this is an important point.

Third, in spite of the decision in principle of the involved ministers, it was not at all certain all along that the mission would go on, and it is justified to speak of ups and downs in the process. Incidentally, the downs were considered showstoppers by some, while for others they were merely obstacles that needed to be taken. The first moment that there were some doubts about the mission came with the publication of the MIVD report on 19 October 2005, which caused hesitations with Minister Kamp and indirectly with Prime Minister Balkenende, resulting in the drawing up of the 16-point list. By working away this list, the doubts dissipated. With the visit of the American Under Secretaries Florey and Fried to the Netherlands on 30 November 2005, the visit of CDS General Berlijn to NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Jones that same day, and the visit of Minister Bot to the NATO meeting on 8 December 2005 the mission seemed to be on. On 9 December it was discussed in the Council of Ministers, but a decision was not reached and ‘passed on’ to 19 December. However, on 16 December D66, party leader Dittrich seemed to blow up the mission. Thanks to Minister Bot’s efforts and idea (‘intention’ instead of ‘decision’) the government could come to a compromise on 22 December 2005. After the article 100-letter of 22 December it took until 13 January 2006 before the Second Chamber was prepared to discuss the mission, a situation caused by the discussion on the terms ‘intention’ and ‘discussion’.

Fourth, there is the position of D66. As a result of the findings of the TCBU in 2001 the Second Chamber must be informed about the government's intention to take part in a foreign mission, but the former must be "reserved in giving a judgement on the mission".<sup>98</sup> Some reserve is obvious, as, after all, Parliament does not know the Cabinet's plans before having received an article 100-letter, and thus, can only run ahead of things. D66's announcement on 16 December 2006 that it could not agree to the mission (so prior to having received the government's article 100-letter) is highly peculiar, all the more so, as the party subsequently threatened with bringing the Cabinet down. The background to this situation is that the party was involved in a struggle for the party leadership between Minister Pechtold, party leader Ditttrich and MP Van der Laan. Because of the earlier hesitations among the ministers and a lack of support in the Second Chamber Ditttrich expected the mission to be off, and by stating that D66 was against the mission, a pull out of the mission by the Cabinet would reflect positively on Ditttrich. This success would make him the unchallenged leader of the party, he was convinced. This way of acting was strongly criticised later in the third term on 2 February 2006, especially by Marijnissen (SP), and Halsema (GroenLinks), forcing Ditttrich take his losses and accept "political reality".<sup>99</sup>

Fifth, there is the question regarding the nature of the mission: reconstruction or fighting. As was indicated above, the mission in Uruzgan was initially given the mark of 'reconstruction mission' and this has been a cause for later criticism. Respondents understand this criticism. For one respondent it is explained by the attention reconstruction got in the period between 22 December 2005 and 2 February 2006, as a necessity to create political and public support. The 'media offensive' of Defence and Foreign Affairs and the choice of experts for the hearing on 30 January 2006 put the emphasis on reconstruction, according to this official. Others deny a premeditated set up for a media offensive, as big (media) attention is an inherent element of the period after a decision has been taken. For them it was clear that the Netherlands wanted an explanation of this decision and that ministers should be available to give it. This was an explanation for the frequent presence of Kamp and Bot in current affairs programmes in that period. Another official is conscious of the emphasis on reconstruction, but he was sincerely convinced of that. OEF was to make a sweep action in Uruzgan prior to the arrival of the Dutch, taking out the Taliban there or chasing them from the province, creating the right starting point for reconstruction. Former CDS, General Berlijn, cannot share this criticism. "I was surprised at that word: reconstruction mission. I remember saying, we have never used that word in this sense. In the Parliamentary letter (article 100-letter) it only said that we were there to enable reconstruction, but it also quite explicitly stated that we would have to fight and take losses into account".<sup>100</sup>

Apart from the ideas and intentions in the early weeks of 2006, it can be said that the mission was called a reconstruction mission from 3 February onwards, and this term has created false expectations. When it appeared that the Dutch troops had to fight and the expected reconstruction did not materialise, the mission met with criticism of both politicians and soldiers. The latter felt misunderstood, when they were fighting every day, while everyone was talking of reconstruction. Did the Netherlands really understand what its soldiers were doing there?<sup>101</sup> The criticism of the politicians, especially the opposition parties GroenLinks and SP, was mainly directed at the fighting. If so much fighting is necessary, can there be any reconstruction? Had the mission not been presented in too rosy a light? At the same time, the majority of the Dutch population was against the mission.<sup>102</sup>

The Dutch government could have prevented this situation by giving more attention to clarifying and speaking about the objectives of the operation, by better explaining why it sent troops to Uruzgan, not only before, but also during the mission. In doing so, it could have avoided most of the present discussion on fighting or reconstruction.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, could the Netherlands still say 'no'? In this reconstruction it was mentioned already that an official of Defence saw that the Dutch flag had been put on the map of Uruzgan during a visit in May 2005. This is in line with a remark of PvdA MP Koenders about his visit to Afghanistan in the summer of 2005: "There everyone told us, even in the NATO headquarters, that our boys would go to Afghanistan, and we were already told several weeks ago that there was a Cabinet decision".<sup>104</sup> Apart from that, Ministers Kamp and Bot and Prime Minister Balkenende had taken a decision and announced it to the NATO Secretary General. Eventually, through negotiations with the Afghan authorities, coalition countries and NATO more and more conditions of the 16-point list were met. So, the question is justified whether the Netherlands, in spite of its own promises and those of other parties, could still say 'no'. A negative decision would not only have damaged its credibility, but it would also have seriously endangered the planning of the ISAF mission in southern Afghanistan.

All respondents were aware of the damage and problems a Dutch 'no' would bring about. In spite of this pressure, the interviewees state that in all phases of the decision making process it was clear that the eventual decision of the government depended on the position of the Parliament; the mission needed clear parliamentary support. This is how this was presented to the coalition partners, the Afghan authorities and NATO. In the eyes of the interviewees the Netherlands could say 'no' at any time, something the other parties were aware of.

On the one hand, this underlines the material right of approval of the Parliament; the opinion of the parliament is an important factor in the totality of the decision making, perhaps even the determining factor. On the other hand, it also reveals a vulnerable part of the decision making procedure, as in the preparation phase there can only be negotiations 'on provision'. The question remains how hard the concessions of the partners actually are in such a situation.

## Conclusion

The above observations rounded off the reconstruction of the political decision making with regard to the ISAF mission. Apart from the irritation about the 'ironmonger's' the cooperation between the officials involved was qualified as good, which creates confidence with regard to future missions. However, the decision making itself went with ups and downs, and at some moments it was uncertain if the mission could go on. Up to an extent the government and the ministries were instrumental in this. Thus, the leaked MIVD report undermined the confidence of a number of ministers, and an open conflict within the government gave rise to tensions within the coalition. On the other hand, it was thanks to political dexterity that the mission could go on. 'Fixing' the 16-point list and the idea of the 'intention' allowed the stalemate to be broken and a decision to be taken on 3 February 2006.

The discussion on 'fighting or reconstruction' is as understandable as it is pointless. The expectations about reconstructions are not met and the soldiers feel they are not understood, which results in a dialogue of the deaf. Unfortunately, the one seems to be impossible without the other, fighting and reconstruction go hand in hand. Up to an extent, the discussion is fuelled by a lack of a strategic narrative; why is the Netherlands active in Afghanistan? By articulating a clear objective the government could have controlled the discussion better. To another extent, the discussion about fighting or reconstruction is fuelled by oppositions with regard to the perceptions on the nature of the problem and the solution for the current situation in southern Afghanistan. It would be more sensible to move the discussion to the question of whether the adopted strategy is the correct one. An open debate on the nature of the problem and the possible solutions may yield more insights than the discussion on 'fighting or reconstruction'. This would be an improvement of the way in which the situation in Uruzgan is dealt with.

## Notes

1. Major L. (Lenny) J. Hazelbag MA is a lecturer and PhD-candidate at the Military Operational Arts and Sciences section of the Netherlands Defence Academy.
2. Coalition party D66 and opposition parties GroenLinks and SP and PvdA MP Van Heteren voted against, all the other MPs (127 out of 150) voted in favour of the mission. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 45-3035.
3. Because of the classification of certain sources it was not possible to research all relevant sources.
4. Because of privacy reasons the names of the interviewees will not be mentioned.
5. <[www.nimh.nl/korea\\_tot\\_kabul/index.html](http://www.nimh.nl/korea_tot_kabul/index.html)>
6. Kamerstukken II 2004-2005, 27 925 nr. 177.
7. The Steering Group Military Operations is an interdepartmental working group of the ministries of General Affairs, Defence and Foreign Affairs and meets on a weekly basis. Source: Ministry of Defence (2007), *Introductiebundel*, The Hague.
8. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
9. General agreement for the Balkenende II Cabinet. <[www.parlement.com/9291000/d/regako3.pdf](http://www.parlement.com/9291000/d/regako3.pdf)>
10. Eyewitness Ministry of Defence.
11. Former Minister of Defence Kamp in an interview with the author on 25 June 2008.
12. Minister Kamp called it 'painful' that the mission did not get support of the PvdA. <[www.elsevier.nl/nieuws/politiek/artikel/asp/artnr/32958/index.html](http://www.elsevier.nl/nieuws/politiek/artikel/asp/artnr/32958/index.html)>
13. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
14. Eyewitnesses Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defence.
15. Eyewitness Ministry of Defence.
16. Kamerstukken II 2004-2005, 28 676 nr. 22, p. 1.
17. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
18. The interviewee did not remember the exact moment.
19. Eyewitness Ministry of Defence.
20. Eyewitness Ministry of Defence.
21. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
22. See for instance: *Kabinet neigt naar nee tegen Afghanistan-missie*. (<[www.nu.nl/news.jsp?n=634375&c=11](http://www.nu.nl/news.jsp?n=634375&c=11)>); 'Afghanistan, zelf gezaaide verwarring', *Elsevier*, 7 January 2006, and 'De lange weg naar de missie', *De Volkskrant*, 29 December 2005.
23. Ibidem.
24. *Bot doet het beleid, Kamp de ijzerwinkel* (<[www.volkskrant.nl/den\\_haag/article147693.ece](http://www.volkskrant.nl/den_haag/article147693.ece)>) and *Kamp vindt 'ijzerwinkel' een belediging* (<[www.volkskrant.nl/den\\_haag/article147780.ece](http://www.volkskrant.nl/den_haag/article147780.ece)>).

25. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 15-865.
26. Kamerstukken II, 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 189, p. 1.
27. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Minister of Defence Kamp in an interview with the author on 25 June 2008.
28. Former Minister of Defence Kamp in an interview with the author on 25 June 2008.
29. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
30. The list of 16 points for improvement consists of the retention of a US contingent in the northern part of Uruzgan at the bases *Anaconda* in Kaz Uruzgan and *Cobra* in Shahidi Hassas; the retention of a US military contingent of at least battle group size and one PRT in Zabul (province southeast of Uruzgan); financing of Kandahar Airfield by NATO instead of the participating countries; enough budget to finance reconstruction projects; back up of NATO forces if the Netherlands needs more troops in Uruzgan; the continuing involvement of the US in the reconstruction of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) in Uruzgan; good governance of the Afghan government and a functioning ANP from the beginning of the mission for the Dutch mission to build on; provisions by Afghan government which allow a responsible transfer of prisoners to Afghanistan and the matter of the special forces in Kandahar.
31. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
32. The remarks on the violation of human rights and respecting the international rule of law must be seen in the context of the (alleged) secret CIA-flights on Schiphol, (alleged) secret detention centres in (amongst others) Poland and Romania and the situation regarding Guantánomo Bay.
33. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 25-1636.
34. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 25-1770.
35. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 26-1740.
36. See for instance: *Kabinet neigt naar nee tegen Afghanistan-missie*, (<[www.nu.nl/news.jsp?n=634375&c=11](http://www.nu.nl/news.jsp?n=634375&c=11)>); 'Afghanistan, zelf gezaaide verwarring', *Elsevier*, 7 January 2006, and 'De lange weg naar de missie', *De Volkskrant*, 29 December 2005.
37. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 25-1623.
38. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
39. The US general Jones was NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander in Chief.
40. <[headlines.nos.nl/forum.php/list\\_messages/853](http://headlines.nos.nl/forum.php/list_messages/853)>.
41. A battlegroup consists in general of three or four companies of 150 to 200 men each.
42. 'Afghanistan, zelf gezaaide verwarring', *Elsevier*, 7 January 2006.
43. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

44. *RTL-4 news* of 16 December 2005.
45. Former CDA MP Dr. Th. B.F.M. Brinkel.
46. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
47. <[www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/2/2/020206\\_afghanistan\\_debat.html](http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/2/2/020206_afghanistan_debat.html)>. Search for *De besluitvorming rond de missie naar Afghanistan*.
48. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
49. *RTL-4 news* and *NOS journaal* of 16 December 2005.
50. *RTL-4 news* of 17 december 2005.
51. During a bewindspersonenoverleg (Policymakers' meeting) the Prime Minister and his vice-Prime Ministers, each on their own Ministries, call together on Thursday nights all important party functionaries (all ministers, junior ministers, the party leadership and chair and the main advisers and spokespersons). The subject of conversation is a number of items on next day's agenda for the Ministers' Council. Officially secret, this agenda is known already early on in the week at the Ministries, the party leadership in the Second Chamber and among well-informed members of the press. So, sensitive political issues are discussed by Cabinet members with their fellow-party members outside the Cabinet, prior to the Cabinet taking a decision on them on Friday.
52. Eyewitness Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
53. <[www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2005/12/21/211205\\_afghanistan.html](http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2005/12/21/211205_afghanistan.html)>
54. On 28 June 1995 the then Minister of Defence Voorhoeve and Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo sent the *Toetsingskader voor uitzending van militaire eenheden ten behoeve van internationale operaties* (Assessment framework for sending out military units in international operations), which was thoroughly revised in 2001. The updated Assessment Framework consists of three parts. The first part relates to the intention and scope of the Assessment Framework: the sending out of military units (so, no sending out of individual service personnel) and only concern voluntary sending out (so, no mission in the context of NATO or WEU obligations). The sending out of military personnel within the Kingdom of the Netherlands is excluded, too, from the Assessment Framework. The second part relates to the provision of information of the government to Parliament. If the Government starts an investigation whether a Dutch contribution to a peace operation is desirable and feasible, the Second Chamber must be informed. The third part of the Assessment Framework addresses a number of points of attention of a political (for instance, the reasons for participating and the mandate of an operation), military (for instance, feasibility and risks of an operation), or organisational/financial (for instance, the duration of a participation) nature. This makes the Assessment Framework an instrument in the decision making process for a military mission.
55. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 194, p. 1.



56. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 193.
57. <[www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2005/12/22/reactiesafghanistan.html](http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2005/12/22/reactiesafghanistan.html)>
58. Ibidem.
59. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 195, p. 1.
60. *NRC Handelsblad*, 28 December 2005.
61. *Elsevier*, 14 January 2006.
62. <[www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/1/12/120106\\_d66.html](http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/1/12/120106_d66.html)>
63. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 197, p. 1.
64. *NRC Handelsblad*, 14 January 2006.
65. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 197, p. 4.
66. *NRC Handelsblad*, 14 January 2006.
67. In the end the visit was cancelled, as it could not be planned due to logistic problems at such short notice.
68. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 198.
69. Eyewitness Ministry of Defence.
70. <[www.mindef.nl/actueel/nieuws/2006/01/20060125\\_mivdrapporten.aspx](http://www.mindef.nl/actueel/nieuws/2006/01/20060125_mivdrapporten.aspx)>
71. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 200.
72. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 193, p. 3.
73. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 193, pp. 3 and 4.
74. See for instance: 'Volgens Bos is de gevechtsmissie gescheiden van de wederopbouwmissie waar de Nederlanders aan zullen meedoen', *Elsevier*, 31 January 2006, *Nederland gaat deelnemen aan de ISAF-missie van de NAVO in de Afghaanse provincie Uruzgan. Deze missie is gericht op wederopbouw*, (<[www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/2/2/020206\\_afghanistan\\_debat.html](http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/2/2/020206_afghanistan_debat.html)>) *Vrijdag 3 februari heeft de Nederlandse Regering besloten definitief deel te nemen aan ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) stage 3. Medio dit jaar vertrekken 1200 militairen naar Uruzgan voor hun wederopbouwmissie*, (<[www.mindef.nl/binaries/Persmap\\_tcm15-59979.pdf](http://www.mindef.nl/binaries/Persmap_tcm15-59979.pdf)>).
75. Kurt Volker served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs from July 2005 until June 2008 and was the deputy of the above-mentioned Daniel Fried. Source: <[www.nato.usmission.gov/Bio/Ambassador\\_Volker.htm](http://www.nato.usmission.gov/Bio/Ambassador_Volker.htm)>
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77. *De Volkskrant*, 11 January 2006.
78. <[www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.23651/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.23651/pub_detail.asp)>
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82. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925 nr. 201.
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88. <[www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/1/31/index.html](http://www.nos.nl/nosjournaal/artikelen/2006/1/31/index.html)>
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90. Eyewitness Ministry of Defence.
91. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925, nr. 207, p. 10.
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93. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 27 925, nr. 207.
94. Former CDA MP Dr. Th.B.F.M. Brinkel.
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96. Kamerstukken II, Handelingen 2005-2006, 45-3013-3035.
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98. Kamerstukken II 2005-2006, 30 162 nrs. 2-3, p. 30.
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