



Hagel Describes Post-ISAF Afghanistan Mission

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American Press Forces Service

The United States will be the largest single contributor to the follow-on NATO operation that will replace the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan in 2015 and beyond, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said Wednesday at NATO headquarters.

Hagel said during a news conference that defense minister meetings brought some clarity to the “Resolute Support” operation NATO will launch to train, advise and assist Afghan forces after those forces have assumed full security responsibility by the end of 2014.

Hagel, along with fellow NATO defense ministers, spent two planning alliance support for post-2014 Afghanistan.

Hagel’s spoke after NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told reporters Resolute Support will be a much smaller mission with five regional components: one each in Afghanistan’s east, west, north and south, and the fifth in the Afghan capital of Kabul. Rasmussen explained the train, advise and assist mission will put trainers at the national level, such as the ministries of defense and interior, and at the corps level of Afghan army and police forces.

Hagel said the U.S. role will be as the overall framework nation, with geographic responsibility in the east and south, the areas of strongest insurgent resistance to the Afghan government.

“We appreciate the commitments other nations are

making, including the announcements by Germany and Italy that they will serve as lead nations for the west and the north,” the secretary said. “Turkey has also indicated they are favorably considering serving as the framework nation in Kabul.”

Hagel said U.S. support will include “new, expert, professional assistance to the [Afghan] army in the area of contracting and fuel support, not just soldiers.” He added, “We intend to be there for the long haul,

and I made that commitment very clear today.”

The secretary also discussed NATO nations’ defense spending in an era when growing security challenges strongly signal the need to invest in new capabilities. Hagel said ministers discussed how to plan such investment in the face of widespread budget constraints among alliance members. ■



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