

Forsvarsminister Gitte Lillelund Bechs indlæg ved konferencen
“*Defeat or Sustainable Exit? The Comprehensive Approach and Military
Capacity Building in Afghanistan*”
ved Forsvarsakademiets og Center for Militære Studiers konference
på Kastellet den 6. og 7. december 2010

- Very timely seminar – so shortly after the Lisbon NATO summit 19-20 November 2010.
- I am extremely pleased to have this opportunity to speak here today.
- It is an impressive group of people and speakers you have gathered. Sure the discussions will be both lively and fruitful.
- Today I will give you my impressions from my recent trip to Afghanistan and I'll tell you about the decisions we took at Lisbon.

- I am often being asked by Danes I meet: What is Afghanistan like these days? Some of the answers can be:
 - More and more Afghans believe their country is moving in the right direction!
 - More and more Afghans think their economy is improving!
 - More and more have faith in the Afghan army and in the Government.
 - Is this wishful thinking?
 - No – it is the facts from Afghanistan according to the latest country-wide survey from Asia Foundation.
 - I will not repeat the number of kids attending schools or the increasing number of Afghans with access to health care. Or the number of millions of Afghans who have returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.
 - These facts are known by most of you here today.

- But I will highlight some interesting facts from the ground:
 - During the last year the Governor in Helmand has replaced poor district Governors with better ones.
 - Clear progress in the “Community Councils” where local Afghans are given a voice.
 - Not only do we see more and more councils – we also see that the members represent wider areas.
 - For example in Narh e Saraj [where Gereshk lies]. The first “Community Council” had primarily members who were living in the city of Gereshk.
 - But with the latest election in 2010 there are now representatives from all over the district. This is an example of a wider sphere of influence.
 - So without overselling the situation in Southern Afghanistan – I see increased Afghan faith in the Government, increased Afghan faith in the army, increased

confidence in the future, better Governors and more Government outreach as indicators that gives me reason for cautious optimism.

- And I can confirm some of these indicators myself.

- I just spent some days wearing a flack jacket and a helmet – inhaling the dusty air of the Helmand province myself.
- You have to be there, inhale the air, talk to the people – you really need to see for yourself.
- Based on the many input I received in Afghanistan I see a picture:
- I see a picture of Afghanistan with a great appetite for self-Government by 2014.
- Where the Afghan police in Helmand was truly focused on taking over.
- Where the Governor in Helmand foresee that Afghans would be ready to take over in 2014.
- And where the Danish soldiers I talked to repeatedly praised the skills and dedication of the Afghan army.

- I see a picture of Afghanistan where a comprehensive approach is absolutely central to success.
- Where we – in a comprehensive manner – use our military operations to achieve civilian effects.
- For example when we use our military forces to secure the construction of a hydro plant near Gereshk – thus providing much needed electricity to the city.
- Or when Danish soldiers are helping and supporting the local leadership in the police to oversee police business and prevent corruption.
- Scott Watkins, the head of NATO's Police Operation Mentoring and Liaison Team division, recently visited the Danish police training mission in Helmand. He said that the Danish effort there was the best among the more than 50 teams he had assessed. He also said "Your military police and the troops also have an excellent approach when it comes to supporting the Afghan police units."
- I talked to some Afghans in Lashkar Gah. They told how they had experienced progress but were tired of the fighting. They also told how people in the cities wanted their kids – including girls – to go to school. And they told me that many girls in Afghanistan today was dreaming of becoming school teachers.

- But of course I also see a less flattering picture of Afghanistan with great challenges ahead. Where poverty, corruption and lack of Afghan capacity are the real spoilers.
- But all in all, my recent visit showed a picture of readiness, hope and possibilities – and real progress.

- This is the development we have been working for.
- I - as well as many of my colleagues and military leaders I ISAF – believe that we have regained the momentum in the campaign.

- London and Kabul conferences and NATO summit showed that the world continue to believe in Afghanistan.
- Afghan security forces are day by day assuming more and more responsibility.
- One of our goals in the Afghanistan strategy was to make Afghan security forces ready to take over.
- As this happens we will gradually hand over the responsibility and reduce our stake in combat operations.

- In Lisbon our Heads of State and Governments concluded, that 2011 will be the year when we start handing over responsibility to the Afghans.

- And Denmark and many other countries worked hard for this result in Lisbon.
- In the lead up to the summit, Denmark was working for the transition to be 1) accountable, 2) sustainable and 3) condition based.
- And of course for the principle: “In together - out together”.

- We were working hard for ambitious timelines and milestones for transition. And realistic timelines, of course.

- Otherwise we run the risk of losing the results which have been achieved at the sacrifices of many of our brave men and women in Afghanistan.

- I should not forget to mention here, that in the preparations for the Lisbon summit Denmark raised the issue of soldiers and veterans.
- It was agreed in the summit declaration that NATO expresses profound gratitude for the professionalism, dedication and bravery of the more than 143,000 men and women who are deployed on NATO’s operations and missions and that NATO pledges to support our veterans.

- I sincerely believe that the summit in Lisbon was a success. It clearly showed the continued determination of the international society (49 states contributes to ISAF) to do the job in Afghanistan.

- In 2014 lead responsibility will transition from the international community to the Afghans.
 - The international society and ISAF will not leave Afghanistan after 2014. Our expectation is that the Afghans will be in charge of combat missions after 2015. But the international community will remain committed to further capacity building of the Afghan security forces also after 2014.
 - 2014 is not an end date for support of the Afghans, but a significant milestone!
 - Very importantly – and a Danish key issue – the transition process will be determined by assessment of the situation on the ground – decisions on transitions have to be sustainable.
 - And equally important: Transition should be with a stronger Afghan involvement and commitment.
 - So – in many ways, Lisbon marked the beginning to the end for the military operation!
 - We will gradually adjust our forces to keep the right balance between combat and training.
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- Now - some of you may be thinking – “aha! – we might start transferring security responsibility but what about the rest?”
 - “What about Governance? What about the civil society?”
 - You are absolutely right. Good governance and the civil society are essential elements and challenges in the transition.
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- In Lisbon it was one of our key concerns that the international society would focus solely on the transfer of lead security responsibility and forget the development and governance side.
 - If you look closer at the process from the London and the Kabul conferences to the Lisbon Summit you will see a great deal of focus on the civilian side of transition.
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- The civilian side is a key challenge – also when it comes to transition:
 - Building up governance capacity and rule of law, building up a civil society in one of the very poorest countries in the world - is very tough indeed. For example - How do you ensure an effective cadre of civil servants in an area like Helmand, where a great proportion of the inhabitants have not learned to read and write?
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- Combat boots on the ground alone won't do us much good in meeting such challenges.
 - Need three pairs of shoes in Afghanistan – combat boots, sandals and polished leather shoes.

- Main part of the Danish contingent already engaged in partnering with the Afghan security forces.
 - Strong Danish focus on improving capacity building in hotspots.
 - Progress achieved by military means must walk hand in hand with building up sustainable local security structures.
 - And it is absolutely critical that capacity building of security forces goes hand in hand with sustainable local governance structures. If we do not involve the Afghans in the planning and implementation there will be a high risk that development projects will not be sustainable – this we have learned from decades of development aid in other continents.
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- To build up sustainable local security structures and sustainable local governance structures you need... a comprehensive approach.
 - Now – again some of you may be thinking: “we haven’t really started doing anything comprehensive yet”.
 - In our own Danish back yard we have embraced the comprehensive approach at the tactical and ministerial level for some years.
 - And in the past years NATO has – building upon a Danish policy-initiative back in 2005 – made significant progress in regards to integrating civilian and military approaches.
 - And now NATO has a new strategic concept with very clear focus on the comprehensive approach and civilian capacity. NATO will in the future be far better able to “plug and play” with civilian actors in international operations.
 - This is really a new milestone in the Alliance’s approach to act in conflicts.
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- Building upon this new strategic concept Denmark will in the future work for the comprehensive approach to take root in all relevant NATO processes and capabilities.
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- Before I finish – I’ll repeat a few key issues for Denmark when it comes to our contribution to Afghanistan in the coming time:
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- Transition in Afghanistan is critical – not only with regard to transfer of lead security responsibility. But the whole “package” of security, governance and development.

- We have a pretty good understanding of what it takes to transfer lead security responsibility. We are already in the process – we need more focus on the civilian side and on building Afghan capabilities.
- In order to “do transition” in the Afghanistan-mission and in similar missions to come - we need NATO to act in a truly comprehensive manner.

- The work does not stop here. Now we must transform policy to action in order to have effect in the missions.
- We'll have to incorporate civilian expertise and civilian planning capacity in NATO structures and processes.

- Because there will be little comprehensive approach unless we start with comprehensive processes!