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### **Gates Says NATO Allies 'Committed' to Mission in Afghanistan**

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 16, 2008 – U.S. defense officials made it clear today that while they appreciate the hard work NATO troop-contributing nations are doing in Afghanistan, more counterinsurgency training would help further the allies' success.

In response to reports that Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates was displeased with NATO allies, Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said that the secretary praises the allies' work. But, he added, the secretary is concerned about their need for counterinsurgency training.

"At no time did he ever criticize any single country for their performance in, or commitment to the mission in Afghanistan," Morrell said.

Gates has praised the countries involved in the fight in Afghanistan's Regional Command South, he said, and has many times singled out Canadian, British and Dutch forces "for their professionalism, commitment and bravery in their work in RC-South."

Gates has noted, however, that NATO as an alliance does not train for counterinsurgency," Morrell said. "The alliance has never had to do it before."

NATO came into being in 1949 as a defensive alliance aimed at the Soviet Union. NATO forces were structured to stop the Soviet Union's Red Army from coming through the Fulda Gap in West Germany and striking through Western Europe.

Gates "is concerned, and he expressed that to the allies, that we may be sending operational mentoring and liaison teams to Afghanistan which are not properly trained," Morrell said.

These teams go to train the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police. Gates is concerned that the teams are not well-schooled in counterinsurgency tactics and strategies, Morrell said.

"That's why there has been a push to send OMLTs to Hohenfels (in Germany) to get counterinsurgency training before going to Afghanistan," he said, using the military shorthand term for operational mentoring and liaison teams.

The U.S. 7th Army Training Center runs a training area at the base that trains Europe-based American units that are deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Gates has seen the progress that forces and civilian organizations can make in following a counterinsurgency regimen, Morrell said. The secretary has visited Khowst in Regional Command East and has seen how American forces have had success with counterinsurgency.

"We've been doing this for six or seven years, so we are figuring it out," Morrell said. "It's taken us a long

time to get there. We're only now enjoying that kind of cohesive counterinsurgency success in RC East."

The bottom line with Gates is that he is concerned with NATO and how it is structured to deal with counterinsurgencies, Morrell said, adding that the secretary is not worried about any particular country.

"Everybody is putting themselves on the line to go after the Taliban and al Qaeda," Morrell said. "They are doing an astoundingly brave job."