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## France is ready to send reinforcements to Afghanistan

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Soldiers stand guard french in the region of Farza, near a bridge they built. Photo credits: ASSOCIATED PRESS

### **The president considers the four options that are submitted in support of the allied forces engaged in regions beset by Taliban attacks.**

Sunday in Munich, the United States, through the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, have once again beaten the recall of its allies, warning that violence and terrorism could be revived in the world if 'NATO suffered a defeat in Afghanistan. Friday, a delegation of Canadian officials was in Paris to ask for the sending of reinforcements french in the south where troops were dispatched by Ottawa to the sentence. Nor repeated that Paris is considering positively while defending itself to act under pressure.

Unlike his predecessor at the Elysée, who did not want to see the French troops linger in Afghanistan, Nicolas Sarkozy sees this country as the main front in the fight against Islamic terrorism. For the head of state, went out to the site in December, a french withdrawal would have disastrous consequences for the other contributors and lead, ultimately, to back Taliban and al-Qaida in Kabul.

The president is about to vote on plans to be submitted "within a few days". The announcements should not occur before the NATO summit in Bucharest, from 2 to 4 April. Coinciding with the remainder of the term french in the region "Centre", increasing the number is expected to last until spring 2009.

### **A fifth "omelet"**

Four options are being prepared under the leadership of senior military and diplomatic. The first would remain focused on the Kabul area is currently based, where the bulk of troops (some 2000 people in total). Much to the satisfaction of its allies, Paris now deploying teams of instructors (Operationnal Mentor and Liaison Team, OMLT), integrated units in Afghanistan. Four of these "omelets", as they are called, are already operational in the field, including in combat zones. A fifth will be deployed in the course of the year. But Paris is called upon to do more. A second option would be a deployment in the "South" region around Kandahar. Paris already maintains six aircraft (3 Rafale and 3

Mirage 2000D) and 200 men.

The Canadians, who have already had about 80 dead, have indicated that they will withdraw their 2500 Kandahar soldiers if NATO was not deploying a thousand men. Last week, the Canadian press mentioned the figure of 700 French transferred to the South. A third option would be to send reinforcements to the west french, in the province of Helmand and to the Iranian border.

Regions delivered to warlords, criminal gangs and poppy growers. The International Force Security Assistance (Sailing), with its 43000 soldiers from 40 countries, is not present. The last assumption would aim to send troops to the east, another "hot" areas of Afghanistan, close to the tribal regions of Waziristan where jihadists operate like fish in water.

"We want to make our system more consistent with a" package "France restructured by NATO," says one at the Elysée. At the presidency, it leans in any scenario for sending some 250 men of the Special Forces. A solution which would have the advantage of a muscular display, a good risk acceptance by the public and economy in terms of staff.

Two hundred commandos of the Special Operations Command (COS) have already been present in Afghanistan until January 2007, initially under American command in the area of Spin Boldak, on the highly sensitive southern border with Pakistan, then Djelalabad. The return of the special forces would send a strong signal to the Americans who appreciate their strong operational capabilities (including through a system of satellite communication ultra-efficient).

Rest in overcoming the reluctance of those who keep an eye on other theatres of crisis, such as southern Lebanon or Chad where these forces are well intervened last week to exfiltrer french nationals and diplomats.



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