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Embassy Row

TALIBAN THREAT

Taliban extremists will gain the "upper hand" in Afghanistan unless NATO and Afghan forces can prevent foreign nations and shadowy organizations from supporting them, a top Afghan diplomat told international intelligence officers in Washington.

"The Taliban cannot be defeated in Afghanistan without dismantling their command-and-control infrastructure" in the border areas of Pakistan, Ashraf Haidari, political counselor at the Embassy of Afghanistan, said in a speech at the U.S. National Defense Intelligence College.

"We know that no insurgency without a cause could ever survive without external sanctuaries and support," he added. "So unless external state and non-state sources of support for the Taliban insurgency ends, military and civilian casualties will continue rising in Afghanistan, gradually giving the terrorists an upper hand."

Mr. Haidari also complained that NATO forces are "increasingly crippled by numerous operational limitations and some 60 caveats imposed" on the troops by member nations of the Western military alliance.

"With the exception of a few countries that actively participate in combat operations against the Taliban in the south and east, the rest avoid deployments in areas where we have needed them," he said.

While the United States, Britain, Canada and the Netherlands do much of the fighting, critics point to nations like Germany as an example of NATO members who avoid combat.

German Ambassador Klaus Scharioth on Tuesday defended his government's deployment of German forces to the north of Afghanistan, saying the decision was made by NATO. He said Germany was the first nation to argue for moving troops out of the Afghan capital of Kabul, and German forces were assigned to the north.

He said observers who are critical of Germany "do not know the facts."

"All the people in the know [are aware] that Germany is doing its part," he told editors and reporters at The Washington Times.

In his speech earlier this month, Mr. Haidari said the alliance has failed in three key areas by dispatching too few troops, failing to coordinate military and civilian reconstruction efforts and neglecting a "public diplomacy" strategy to win the hearts and minds of Afghans.

REVOLUTIONARY GREECE

Alexandros P. Mallias celebrated his last Greek Independence Day as Greece's ambassador in Washington with a rousing message on the anniversary of the 19th-century uprising against the Ottoman Empire and with a visit to the White House to celebrate with President Obama.

"The vision and aspirations of the torchbearers of the revolution, sung and unsung heroes who sacrificed life and limb fighting under circumstances unfathomable to us today, inspired not only those under the boot of tyranny, but reverberated across mountains and seas, resonating with individuals who valued freedom throughout the world," the ambassador wrote in the message sent to friends and reporters.

Greeks celebrate March 25 as the anniversary of the revolution that broke out in 1821 and lasted until 1829. The Ottoman Empire officially recognized Greek independence in the 1832 Treaty of Constantinople.

Mr. Mallias noted that several prominent Americans supported the Greek revolution, including Daniel Webster, then a senator from Massachusetts who later served as secretary of state; Henry Clay, the Kentucky senator known as the "Great Compromiser"; and James Williams, a former slave from Baltimore who died fighting for Greece.

"Let us pay homage to champions of liberty by protecting and cherishing the freedoms and dignity won through their struggles," he said.

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