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## Some Allies Wary of New Troop Pledges

By [ALAN COWELL](#)

PARIS — As political and military leaders across the globe pondered [President Obama](#)'s announcement of his Afghan strategy, European allies offered a mixed response on Wednesday, with some of the biggest contributors to the [NATO](#) coalition withholding promises of immediate troop reinforcements.

The NATO secretary general, [Anders Fogh Rasmussen](#), said he believed other members of the alliance would contribute 5,000 soldiers — and possibly more — to make a “substantial” increase to the 42,000 NATO troops already ranged against the [Taliban](#).

“This is not just America’s war,” he said at the alliance’s headquarters in Brussels.

But the president’s entreaties drew an ambivalent response in some European nations where the war is broadly unpopular among voters who question why it is being fought and whether it can be won.

France and Germany ruled out an immediate commitment, saying they were awaiting an Afghanistan conference in London in late January. Other nations offered only limited numbers of soldiers.

Álvaro de Vasconcelos, director of the [European Union](#) Institute for Security Studies in Paris, said the war was “badly perceived in Europe, contaminated by the Iraq war, the killing of civilians, the collateral damage, all of which has contributed to a widespread opposition to the Afghan war among Europeans.”

“If the civilian side is as important as the military one — training the Afghan police, judiciary and doing development, which Europeans know very well how to do and consider their main expertise — it will make it easier for European leaders to get support.”

“More troops for a very unpopular war, without knowing where we’re going, doesn’t work — you can’t sell it to Europeans,” Mr. de Vasconcelos said. “But you can sell the transition from war to crisis management.”

Mr. Obama’s plan to send around 30,000 more American soldiers was closely watched in Pakistan, gripped by a Taliban insurgency intertwined with Afghanistan’s.

There, distrust of American intentions runs deep, partly because the United States is seen as having abandoned the region after the Soviet Union’s withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, and there is widespread fear in the security establishment of a repetition of those events. And Pakistanis remain concerned about the possible implications of a huge troop surge just across their long and porous border with Afghanistan.

“Pakistan looks forward to engaging closely with the United States in understanding the full import of the

new strategy and to ensure that there would be no adverse fallout on Pakistan,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Shireen Mazari, editor of an English-language Pakistani daily newspaper, The Nation, said the American surge was unlikely to bring success and would force Taliban insurgents into Pakistan. “Their policy is flawed, and it has to be changed. Playing the numbers game has to be stopped,” she said.

Mehmood Shah, a former military official and a security analyst based in Peshawar, Pakistan, said: “The biggest apprehension is that our international borders will be crossed by the U.S. military. It can create a big dilemma for us.”

In Europe, some analysts also said Mr. Obama’s speech had fallen short of expectations.

“This is one of Obama’s most important foreign policy decisions,” said Ayesha Khan, an analyst with Chatham House, a policy institute in London. “It comes after months of deliberation and a painstaking consultative process, but the outcome to this much-anticipated and long-awaited announcement has been an anticlimax for those who expected a paradigm shift.”

Mr. Rasmussen, the NATO secretary general, did not say where he expected additional coalition forces to come from. Britain, the second-largest contributor after the United States, has promised to add 500 to its 9,000-strong Afghan deployment, and Prime Minister [Gordon Brown](#) said Wednesday that Britain would “continue to play its full part in persuading other countries to offer troops to the Afghanistan campaign.”

Poland’s defense minister said the country would [increase its contingent by 600](#) from its current level of 2,000, to serve in combat, reconnaissance and training missions, The Associated Press reported, but the decision awaits governmental approval. A Spanish newspaper said Spain might increase its deployment by 200 soldiers to 1,200. Britain pledged to press other allies to boost their contingents, and Italy hinted at an unspecified increase beyond its current 2,800 soldiers in the [patchwork of foreign troops](#) in Afghanistan, known as the International Security Assistance Force.

With more than 2,800 soldiers on the ground — and a relatively high casualty rate among them — Canada welcomed Mr. Obama’s decision, with Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon saying the “additional U.S. resources will help to provide a more secure environment for the Afghan people.”

The French president, [Nicolas Sarkozy](#), called Mr. Obama’s speech on Tuesday night “courageous, determined and lucid, giving new impetus to the international commitment” but he did not commit to adding to France’s nearly 3,750 troops now in the war zone.

“France expects clear commitments from Afghan authorities, in answer to the strong commitments of the international community, on policy, economic and social development and on fighting drug trafficking,” he said.

The foreign minister, [Bernard Kouchner](#), said in a [radio interview](#) that France had increased its force levels in September and, in its area of operations, “our zone doesn’t need a troop increase. Our area is well taken care of.”

But he did not rule out further adjustment, referring to the international conference on Afghanistan in London in late January. "We will see how to adjust things then."

Germany, too, is awaiting the gathering in London to decide whether to increase the size of its contingent. "We hear the wishes of the United States, but we will not decide in the coming days. We will decide only after the Afghanistan conference," Chancellor [Angela Merkel](#) said.

Several German newspapers have reported that Washington is pressing for up to 2,500 more German soldiers. As the third-largest contributor in the alliance with 4,300 troops on the ground, Germany is currently debating a one-year renewal of a parliamentary mandate for the deployment which sets a maximum level of 4,500 troops.

An increase would need fresh parliamentary approval.

In a statement issued in Kabul on Wednesday Gen. [Stanley A. McChrystal](#), the top commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, said the president's review of Afghan strategy had "provided me with a clear military mission and the resources to accomplish our task."

General McChrystal had sought up to 40,000 American reinforcements in addition to the 68,000 already there.

"We face many challenges in Afghanistan, but our efforts are sustained by one unassailable reality: neither the Afghan people nor the international community want Afghanistan to remain a sanctuary for terror and violence," General McChrystal said. "The coalition is encouraged by President Obama's commitment and we remain resolute to empowering the Afghan people to reject the insurgency and build their own future."

Apart from the political and military consequences of the American strategy, others in the region are looking for an economic component in Washington's involvement.

In a letter this month to Pakistan's president, [Asif Ali Zardari](#), Mr. Obama extended an offer of expanded, long-term cooperation, including helping Pakistan address "immediate energy, water, and related economic crisis."

"The speech creates a window of opportunity," said Feisal Naqvi, a lawyer in Lahore, Pakistan. "But the partnership has to have some visible aid component." The United States government, he said, "has to woo the people of Pakistan."

*Reporting was contributed by Carlotta Gall and Sangar Rahimi from Kabul, Afghanistan; Sabrina Tavernise and Salman Masood from Islamabad, Pakistan; Steven Erlanger and Nadim Audi from Paris; and Victor Homola from Berlin.*

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