

**Interview of Ambassador John D. Negroponte  
Director of National Intelligence**

**With Mr. Gary Thomas, Voice of America**

**October 4, 2006  
Transcript – As Aired**

---

**Part III**

MR. THOMAS: The top U.S. intelligence official says the government of Afghanistan must expand its authority over more of the country if the resurgence of the Taleban is to be checked. In a VOA interview, John Negroponte says the expanded NATO force is having a significant impact on the Taleban. VOA correspondent Gary Thomas reports from Washington.

MR. THOMAS: In an interview in his Washington office, Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte said the Afghan government must extend its authority beyond the capital Kabul in the face of Taleban resurgence.

AMB. NEGROPONTE: It's challenging. And one of the main issues for the government of Afghanistan is to extend its writ and its reach into the more remote, not only province capitals, but into the districts as well. But they're working on it. There are programs that exist that are trying to address that, and that's one of the things that they're going to have to work hard on going forward.

MR. THOMAS: The Taliban was ousted from power by Afghan opposition fighters and U.S. Special Forces in 2001 for giving safe haven to the al-Qaida terrorists who carried out the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. But the Taleban is experiencing something of a resurgence, and attacks on coalition and Afghan forces have risen sharply in recent months.

Negroponte says the Taliban is, like other terrorist groups, exploiting local grievances about issues such as corruption and poor governance to attract recruits. He also attributes the increase in attacks to a more aggressive posture by NATO forces, which have taken an increasingly direct role in fighting the insurgency based along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

AMB. NEGROPONTE: I think that several things may explain the increased violence in southern Afghanistan, not the least of which that coalition forces and NATO forces have been taking a more proactive posture in that part of the country. And NATO forces have started going into areas that had previously not been touched by allied forces. So I think that one has to take that into account. And my understanding is that the Taleban have suffered some quite severe losses in those engagements. And it remains to be seen what the net outcome of all of that is.

MR. THOMAS: The new spate of attacks has also sparked another war, this one of words between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and his Pakistani counterpart, Pervez Musharraf.

President Karzai, who was in Washington recently, accuses President Musharraf of not cracking down on Taleban activity in and infiltration from Pakistan's largely lawless tribal areas on the border. President Musharraf, who was also in Washington at the same time, responds by saying the Taleban is an Afghan problem, not a Pakistani one.

President Bush, who considers both Pakistan and Afghanistan key allies in combating terrorism, hosted both men at a White House dinner in an attempt to mend the rift between the two countries.

Recent Pakistani military action to root out terrorists in the border area known as the Waziristan Agency was ineffectual, so the government recently signed a treaty with tribal leaders there to get them to stop the cross-border infiltration.

Asked about the controversial treaty, Director Negroponte would not comment directly on the pact, but said it remains to be seen if it will accomplish its purpose.

AMB. NEGROPONTE: So I think, as they say, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating, and we'll have to see how in actual fact this arrangement is implemented. But I think you're right to raise the issue, and it's certainly something that we among others, will be watching very carefully.

MR. THOMAS: However, Barnett Rubin of New York University, a former U.N. advisor in Afghanistan who is considered to be the foremost American academic expert on the country, says the treaty is already in trouble.

MR. RUBIN: The way President Musharraf describes the treaty - as a deal with (tribal) elders to get their political support against extremism - would be a very good idea which I would support if it were true. But if you have been following this for several months, as I have been, you know it was actually initiated by the Taleban themselves in order to get a safe haven, which they now have. And it is clear that since the treaty was signed they are not in any way observing the agreement not to engage in cross-border activities.

MR. THOMAS: On Wednesday, the Afghan intelligence agency announced it had arrested 17 aspiring suicide bombers who, it alleged, had trained in Pakistan.