

## March 3, 2009 - Murtha says Afghanistan Plan Lacks Goal

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By KIMBERLY HEFLING, AP

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WASHINGTON (AP) &mdash; Rep. John Murtha said Tuesday the situation in Afghanistan is so challenging that he estimated it would take 600,000 troops to fully squelch violence in the country.

The Pennsylvania Democrat, who chairs the powerful subcommittee that funds the military, said his figure was based on the country's history of rigorous fighting and its size.

"That's what I estimate it would take in a country that size to get it under control," Murtha said in an interview.

Murtha also said he's uncomfortable with President Barack Obama's decision to increase the number of troops in the country by 17,000 before a goal was clearly defined. But he says he anticipates a plan will be developed to train Afghan security forces, and then the U.S. military will get out. He said he sees Afghanistan has more of a diplomatic mission, than a military one.

"I think you'll see a change," Murtha said.  
"I'm confident you're going to see them only adjusting for a short period of time with these additional troops."

Last month, Obama announced new troops would be sent to Afghanistan to augment the 38,000 there. The number of troops eventually to be sent to Afghanistan will depend on what strategy the Obama administration lays out, and that is under review.

There already, however, has been much debate about troops numbers. Some argue that too many forces would be counterproductive, partly because of Afghan distaste for having foreign forces on their soil.

Huge numbers have been mentioned before, including by the previous NATO commander in Afghanistan, U.S. Gen. Dan McNeill. He told a Pentagon press conference last year that if commanders were to go by U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, for example, and apply the factors of land mass and population, the number needed might be well over 400,000, including international forces and indigenous forces.

Commanders believe the best force to use against an insurgency is generally the local force and have been working with difficulty for years to train and equip Afghan security forces.