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Dutch hearing on Afghanistan gets under way

The Hague (7 December) - The Lower House of the Dutch Parliament is holding a hearing on the Netherlands' mission in Afghanistan today. Representatives of NATO, the military, and aid organisations will testify at the hearing, as well as experts and government officials.

The first person to appear at the hearing is Afghan defence minister Abdul Rahim Wardak. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has said he will not be attending, much to the irritation of many Dutch MPs. The aim of the hearing is to pave the way for a parliamentary debate on extending the Dutch mission in the Afghan province of Uruzgan until 2010.

The Green Left and Socialist parties held an alternative hearing on Thursday. They believe that the official hearing does not include enough input from opponents of extending the mission.

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