

# Transatlantic Focus

## A USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter



UNITED STATES MISSION TO  
**NATO**



### President Obama Sends a Message to NATO

On the day of his inauguration, as he prepared to be sworn in as the 44th President of the United States, President-elect Barack Obama sent a message to the NATO Secretary General and the Members of the North Atlantic Council reaffirming U.S. commitment to the common security and shared democratic values of the transatlantic Alliance. In his message, read by Ambassador Kurt Volker to an informal gathering of the NATO Secretary General and Permanent Representatives, President-elect Obama said, "The lesson of the 21st century is that the security of our nations and our people is shared. We face an extraordinary set of challenges, and must meet them together. That is why we must renew our alliance, respect every nation's contribution, and strengthen our capacity to meet the challenges of our young century."

- [President Obama's Letter to NATO](#)
- [President Obama's Inaugural Address](#)

### U.S. Diplomacy



#### Secretary of State Clinton Calls for Robust Diplomacy

On January 22, Hillary Clinton was sworn in as the 67th U.S. Secretary of State. Later, she arrived at the State Department and spoke to a large gathering of employees.

In her welcome remarks, the Secretary said, "I will do all that I can, working with you, to make it abundantly clear that robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing America's future." [more](#)

- [Secretary Clinton Welcome Remarks | Video](#)



#### U.S. Announces Special Envoys to Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Middle East

On January 22, President Obama joined Secretary of State Clinton to announce former Senator George Mitchell

as his special envoy to the Middle East peace process and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as his special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan—moves that underscore the new administration's commitment to renewing America's leadership through reinvigorated diplomacy. "We are confronted by extraordinary, complex and interconnected global challenges," President Obama said at the State Department. "Progress will not come quickly or easily, nor can we promise to right every single wrong around the world. But we can pledge to use all elements of American power to protect our people and to promote our interests and ideals, starting with principled, focused and sustained American diplomacy."

- [President Obama Remarks](#)
- [Secretary Clinton Remarks | Video](#)



#### U.S. and Georgia Sign Charter on Strategic Partnership

On January 9, the U.S. and Georgia signed the [U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership](#). The bilateral charter outlines our enhanced cooperation to help Georgia advance security, democratic, and market economic reforms to strengthen Georgia, bolster our partnership, and deepen Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration. At the signing ceremony, Secretary Rice said, "Georgia is a very important partner of the United States, a valued partner. Our relationships rest, of course, on shared values of democracy, on security, on economic prosperity." This agreement is similar to the [U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Security and Partnership](#) which was signed on December 19, 2008. [more](#)

### Piracy

### Afghanistan



#### Vice President Biden visits Afghanistan

On January 10, then Vice President-elect Joseph Biden visited Afghanistan to meet with Afghan and U.S. leaders and to thank U.S. troops serving there for their

service. While in Kabul, Vice President Biden had discussions with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and was briefed by General McKiernan, Commander [International Security Assistance Force \(ISAF\)](#). He also traveled to ISAF Regional Command South Headquarters in Kandahar and received a full brief on NATO activities in southern Afghanistan. Vice President Biden reaffirmed his and President Barack Obama's pledge to fully support troops and their efforts in the region. [more](#)



#### U.S. Underscores Commitment to Afghanistan

In his first trip abroad in 2009, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher traveled to Afghanistan for

discussions with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and other senior government leaders. Speaking to the press in Kabul, Assistant Secretary Boucher reiterated the U.S. support for Afghanistan: "So as we start a new year let me make clear once again the absolute commitment of the United States to a sovereign, independent, democratic Afghanistan with a government that can provide safety and justice and opportunity to its citizens." Assistant Secretary Boucher also highlighted the importance of this election year in Afghanistan and noted that the Afghan Independent Election Commission had already registered 3.5 million new voters in over 200 districts.

- [Assistant Secretary Boucher Remarks on U.S.-Afghanistan Relations](#)



#### ISAF Takes Additional Measures to Avoid Civilian Casualties

As the NATO-led [International Security Assistance Force \(ISAF\)](#)

works with the Afghanistan National Security Forces to provide security in Afghanistan and combat terrorism, it strives to avoid civilian casualties. Underscoring this, the Commander of ISAF forces, General McKiernan, recently issued a new tactical directive that states that respect for the Afghan people, culture and religion must guide ISAF personnel, both on and off the battlefield. [more](#)



#### Afghan National Army Taking the Lead in More Operations

Enabling Afghan National



### U.N. Forms Group to Coordinate Actions Against Maritime Piracy

As demonstrated by NATO's rapid deployment of [Operation Allied Provider](#), the Alliance is greatly concerned by the rising incidence of piracy off the Horn

of Africa and is committed to fight this scourge. On January 14, the international fight against piracy took another step forward when 24 nations and five international organizations formed a contact group at the United Nations to strengthen efforts to thwart piracy off the coast of Somalia. "The contact group notes with deep concern that piracy off the coast of Somalia grew significantly in 2008, and that attacks on shipping vessels can be expected to increase without enhanced international efforts," the new Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia said in a prepared statement at U.N. headquarters. [more](#)

- [Statement by the Contact Group](#)



### Anti-Piracy Goes Hi-Tech

With NATO undertaking its first anti-piracy mission this past year in response to a request for help from the UN, both NATO and individual member nations are turning to the [NATO Undersea Research](#)

[Centre \(NURC\)](#) for solutions to dealing with pirates in less lethal ways. NURC researches the viability of commercial technologies for defense and security applications or their application in a multinational defense organization. New and effective technologies are essential for NATO to carry out missions beyond its traditional areas of responsibility and, according to NURC scientist Dr. Ronald Kessel, commercial industries are key players in improving capabilities and interoperability within the Alliance. "No single NATO member nation has the budget or research staff to develop these kinds of technologies from scratch," says Dr. Kessel. [more](#)



Security Forces is a core part of NATO's strategy in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Army (ANA)

currently is a growing force with 67,000 soldiers, up 26,000 from last year, and is expected to increase to 134,000 soldiers by 2014. In this past year, the Afghan security forces have assumed a leading role in the protection of their homeland, with 62 percent of the fighting against insurgents being led by the ANA with coalition forces acting in a supporting capacity.

One recent example of the ANA taking the lead is operation "Op Babur" in Uruzgan province. In late December 2008, the 4th ANA Brigade in Uruzgan took charge of "Op Babur" and conducted a number of



operations to reduce the risk of IEDs and counter insurgents. This operation, which was based on the 4th Brigade's own intelligence, resulted in the discovery of several IEDs and had a direct impact upon insurgents by taking away their freedom of movement. The Afghan military was supported by an Australian infantry platoon and an Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT). "This operation shows a distinct enhancement in Afghan capability. They are capable of coordinating platoon level operations with ISAF support," the operational commander of the OMLT, Major David McCammon, remarked after the operation. [more](#)

### Video Message



**Ambassador Volker:  
The Obama  
Administration  
Offers a Transatlantic  
Opportunity**

[Video](#) | [Transcript](#)

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is published and distributed by the Public Affairs Section of the United States Mission to NATO - Brussels.