

# Transatlantic Focus

## A USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter



UNITED STATES MISSION TO  
**NATO**



### Vice President Biden Consults with NATO Allies on Afghanistan

On March 10, [Vice President Joseph Biden](#) visited NATO Headquarters in Brussels to consult with NATO Allies on Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to ensure their views help inform the strategic review ordered by President Obama. In his opening remarks to the [North Atlantic Council \(NAC\)](#), Vice President Biden said, "What we want to learn is what your countries believe is working, what you think is not working, how we can do a better job in stopping Afghanistan and Pakistan from being a haven for terrorists. And the United States believes that we share a vital security interest in meeting that challenge."

Vice President Biden shared with Allies some of the factors shaping U.S. thinking, including the requirement to set

clear and achievable goals: "We need to look at Afghanistan and Pakistan together, because success in one requires progress in the other; the imperative of a comprehensive approach with a strong civilian and diplomatic effort is necessary because we know there is no purely military solution to either Afghanistan or Pakistan; the centrality of building up Afghan security forces – because our goal is not to stay in Afghanistan, it's to be able to leave, and to leave behind Afghan forces that can provide for the security and safety of the people of Afghanistan; and the need to ensure the security and legitimacy in this year's presidential elections."

After the NAC meeting, at a joint press conference with [NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer](#), Vice President Biden said that his visit was just the beginning of the consultative process with Allies.

Vice President Biden also met with leaders of the EU and with representatives from non-NATO members of the [International Security Assistance Force \(ISAF\)](#), the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. [more](#)

- [Remarks by Vice President Biden to the NAC](#)
- [Remarks by Vice President Biden at Joint Press Conference with NATO Secretary General](#)
- [Q&A Session of Press Conference with Vice President and NATO Secretary General](#)

### NATO Foreign Ministers Meet in Brussels

On March 5, in her first visit to NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Secretary Clinton joined Allied Foreign Ministers for informal talks on a broad range of issues in the run-up to [NATO's 60th Anniversary Summit](#) in early April. Two of the main issues discussed were the situation in [Afghanistan](#) and [NATO-Russia relations](#).

Secretary Clinton called for a high-level international conference to map a new strategy for Afghanistan. "We presented the idea of what is being called a big-tent meeting, with all parties who have a stake and an interest in Afghanistan. That would obviously include NATO members, ISAF members – many of whom are not NATO members – donors, nations that have regional, strategic, and transit positions vis-à-vis Afghanistan, international organizations," Secretary Clinton said. Subsequently, the [Dutch government announced](#) that it will host this one-day meeting at The Hague on March 31. The conference will be chaired by the UN and the governments of the Netherlands and Afghanistan will be co-chairs.

Additionally, NATO Ministers agreed to resume the [NATO-Russia Council](#) as a forum to discuss areas where the Allies and Russia agree and to address subjects of strong disagreement. In remarks to the press, Secretary Clinton said, "It's time to explore a fresh start. We can and must find ways to work constructively with Russia where we share areas of common interest, including helping the people of Afghanistan, arms control and nonproliferation, counter-piracy and counternarcotics and addressing threats posed by Iran and North Korea." [more](#)

- [Secretary Clinton Remarks at Press Conference](#)
- [Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer Remarks at Press Conference](#)
- [Photo Gallery: Secretary Clinton at NATO](#)



### U.S.-Russia Relations



#### Secretary Clinton and Russian FM Lavrov Discuss "Resetting" U.S.-Russia Relations

Following her meeting with NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels, Secretary Clinton traveled to Geneva,

Switzerland to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to discuss a range of issues including arms control, cooperating on Middle East peace, stabilizing Afghanistan, and confronting Iran's nuclear aspirations. As with the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting, an important aspect of the meeting was to begin establishing a relationship with Russia that will allow the U.S. and Russia to work constructively on areas of common concern. After the meeting, Secretary Clinton said that she was pleased to have the opportunity to begin the discussion of "resetting" U.S.-Russia relations, a process that will take time, and that, "Where we can agree, like our position on the START treaty and nonproliferation, we are prepared to get to work. ... And where we have differences, we are keeping those on the list because we think through closer

### Afghanistan



#### Afghan Security Forces Should Shoulder More Responsibility

A key part of the U.S. and NATO strategy in Afghanistan is training and enabling Afghan Security Forces to provide for

Afghanistan's own security. In a recent press conference, the U.S. commanding officer in charge of training, Army [Major General Richard Formica](#), discussed the progress that the 80,000-strong [Afghan National Army \(ANA\)](#) is making and observed that it is increasingly taking the lead in operations. Appearing with General Formica, who assumed command of [Combined Security Transition Team Afghanistan \(CSTC-A\)](#) in November 2008, was Canadian army [Brigadier General Alan Howard](#), assistant commanding general for ANA development. General Howard said the ANA has undergone an "amazing evolution," has garnered the respect of the local populace and continues to expand its capabilities. "They're also extremely well respected by the local population," he said. "Each

cooperation and building trust in each other we can even tackle some of those differences." [more](#)

- [Secretary Clinton Remarks with Russian FM Lavrov](#)

## NATO



### "Des nouvelles merveilleuses": U.S. and NATO Welcome French Reintegration to NATO Military Command

On March 11, French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced that France should reintegrate into the [NATO military command structure](#). In 1966, France withdrew from the military command structure but maintained its presence in the political decision making committees of NATO, including the [North Atlantic Council \(NAC\)](#). Even while not integrated into the NATO military command structure, France has been an important political Ally within NATO and continues to make crucial contributions to NATO operations and missions. The U.S. welcomed President Sarkozy's announcement: "Des nouvelles merveilleuses – marvelous news," said Gordon Duguid, State Department Acting Deputy Spokesman. He added that France has been "one of the most active military members of the Alliance" and "the United States stands ready to facilitate France's reentry in any way that the French find helpful." While noting that the French Parliament must still state its position on the issue, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer also "warmly welcomed" President Sarkozy's choice and said France's "full participation in all the civil and military decision-making and planning processes cannot but strengthen the Alliance further, in my view. I think it will also open up new prospects for a more solid, confident and complementary relationship between NATO and the EU."

- [French President Sarkozy Speech at Fondation pour la Recherche stratégique conference](#)
- [Statement by the NATO Secretary General on France and NATO](#)

## Video Message



### Ambassador Volker on Secretary Clinton's first visit to NATO, NATO-Russia relations, and consulting with Allies on Afghanistan

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

time I'm out with them, I am simply amazed on the interface that they have with the locals." General Howard also noted that the ANA is focused on growing to 134,000 soldiers by December 2011. [more](#)



### Afghan Women Celebrate Culture, Achievements at Women's Day Event

An important area of progress in Afghanistan has been women's rights and freedom. On March 8, in the Bazarak district of Afghanistan's Panjshir province, more than 100 Afghan women and girls came together to recognize their accomplishments and culture during an International Women's Day celebration. The event was organized by the Panjshir director of women's affairs and featured a series of speakers who highlighted economic, political and social challenges, as well as accomplishments of the valley's women. "Panjshir has very smart women," Deputy Governor Abdul Kabiri said. "They are working beside the men for the development of society. With education, we can have doctors and teachers. ... Our society needs everything." U.S. women soldiers also participated in the event. U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant Dawn Allison-Hess of the Panjshir [Provincial Reconstruction Team \(PRT\)](#) spoke to the gathering and shared a similarity between Afghan and American women: "The reason I can stand before you as a woman serving in the U.S. military is because of the hard work, sacrifice and dedication of countless women who came before me," she said. "I am grateful for their dedication, as I know your daughters and granddaughters will be grateful to you for selflessly striving to secure their futures." [more](#)



### All-Female Marine Team Conducts First Mission in Southern Afghanistan

Engaging with the local population is a key aspect of the international community's mission to bring security and development to Afghanistan. Due to cultural sensitivities, however, it can be difficult for male soldiers to interact with Afghan women. To address this challenge, an all-female U.S. Marine team has been formed and deployed to southern Afghanistan. Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Johanna Shaffer, the team leader, said their first mission was very successful and that the team was accepted by both the men and women in the village where they conducted a cordon-and search operation. "If the women know we are here to help them, they will likely pass that on to their children," she said. "If the children have a positive perspective of Alliance forces, they will be less likely to join insurgent groups or participate in insurgent activities." [more](#)

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