

Transatlantic Focus

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NATO Defense Ministers Meet in Brussels June 12-13



For the first time since April's NATO Summit in Bucharest, Defense Ministers from all 26 NATO Allies met in Brussels. The Ministers reviewed implementation of key decisions made by Heads of State in Bucharest on operations, particularly Afghanistan and Kosovo, and the Alliance's defense transformation efforts. [more](#)

Secretary Gates told journalists that the meetings were productive and some progress was made in sustaining the forward momentum from the Bucharest Summit. He welcomed

Italy's announcement to lift the mobility caveat on its forces in Afghanistan; national restrictions on how ISAF forces can be used have been a significant concern for ISAF commanders and Secretary Gates said that he hoped that Italy's decision would set an example for others. Secretary Gates also noted the Alliance's decision to train a new Kosovo Security Force which is particularly important since Kosovo's new constitution took effect on June 15. [Secretary Gates Press Conference](#)



Gates Speaks from Heart to Spur NATO Nations on Afghanistan At one point during the meetings, after listening to discussion on administrative issues, Secretary Gates felt compelled to set aside his prepared remarks and "speak from the heart" to urge NATO Allies to do more in Afghanistan. Secretary Gates began by saying he was so impassioned because, "in May, U.S. casualties in Afghanistan exceeded our casualties in Iraq for the first time," and many of the same shortfalls that existed 18 months ago still remain. He said governments must take decisions and action that matches their rhetoric on Afghanistan. He added that troop shortages are the top issue to address but more help is also needed for military and police training. [more](#)



NATO Commits to Training Kosovo Security Force NATO Defense Ministers met with their counterparts from non-NATO countries that contribute to security and stability in Kosovo and agreed that NATO will

supervise the stand-down of the Kosovo Protection Force and take on the duty of training and launching a new Kosovo Security Force, a multi-ethnic security force under direct control of the civilian government in Pristina. This is a key decision in support of Kosovo during a crucial time as its new constitution took effect on June 15, and UN troops prepare to hand over policing duties to the EU. While final transition arrangements between the UN and EU are still being determined, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer emphasized that the mandate for NATO's forces in Kosovo (KFOR) will not change, saying "KFOR has been, and will stay the bedrock of stability in Kosovo." [more](#)



Ministers Review Positive NATO-Russia Cooperation The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was created in 2002, as a forum for consultation and cooperation between Russia and the 26 NATO member nations. At the latest meeting of the NRC on

June 13, Defense Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to pursue long-term cooperation on international security issues and develop interoperability between NATO and Russian forces. There was clear agreement that Afghanistan continues to be a common concern and the NRC moved forward on collaborative efforts to improve transportation of ISAF supplies through Russia to forces in Afghanistan. Other positive developments included increased cooperation in naval operations and progress in theater missile defense talks. While acknowledging disagreements on some issues, Ministers reaffirmed the NRC's value as a forum for a constructive exchange of views. [NATO-Russia Council Chairman's Statement](#)



Ambassador Nuland Receives Distinguished Public Service Award On the final day of the June 2008 NATO Defense Ministerial, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates awarded Ambassador Victoria Nuland the

Department of Defense Distinguished Public Service Award in recognition for having "provided the leadership and vision to transform" the alliance. Defense Secretary Gates praised the "sound guidance and wise council" the outgoing Ambassador provided top leaders, describing the critical role she played over the course of her three years as the United States' Permanent Representative to NATO in "enlarging NATO with deserving nations, transforming NATO capabilities, and leading the effort to make ISAF NATO's top priority." Ambassador Nuland will return to Washington, DC at the end of June to serve as the Diplomat in Residence at the National Defense University for the following year.

Ukraine Supports NATO-led Operations On June 13, Defense Ministers took stock of NATO-Ukraine relations and noted Ukraine's contributions to the Alliance. Defense Ministers welcomed the active support that Ukraine is making to NATO-led operations and missions and noted with appreciation Ukraine's continued offering of strategic airlift capabilities. Furthermore, Defense Ministers accepted Ukraine's offer to significantly contribute to the NATO Response Force. [NATO-Ukraine Commission Joint Statement](#)

Established in 1997, the NUC is a forum for consultation and decision making for NATO Allies and Ukraine. It is responsible for developing the NATO-Ukraine relationship and for addressing areas of common concern. In April 2008, NATO Heads of State agreed that Ukraine would one day be a member of NATO and the Alliance is currently in a period of intensive engagement and cooperation with Ukraine on areas of defense and security-related issues and reform. The next step towards NATO membership for Ukraine is the Membership Action Plan (MAP); the first assessment of its progress toward MAP will be made by NATO Foreign Ministers in December 2008.



New step in the Strategic Airlift Capability Defense Ministers of the Strategic Airlift Capability nations met to review progress and plan for receiving the first aircraft in November 2008. These fifteen nations, including two non-NATO countries, have

agreed to purchase three C-17 aircraft, to be based in Hungary, for use by participating nations to meet national airlift requirements, including for NATO and EU missions. The meeting was highlighted by the signature of the Netherlands of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that governs the purchase and operation of the aircraft. Six other nations, including the U.S., have already signed the MOU. [more](#)

