

Transatlantic Focus

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UNITED STATES MISSION TO
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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 the status of operations, particularly Afghanistan and

Kosovo, and progress on enhancing and transforming the Alliance's defense capabilities to meet 21st century threats. [more](#)

NATO Commits to Training Kosovo Security Force At the June 2008 Ministerial, NATO Defense Ministers met with their counterparts from non-NATO nations that contribute to the Kosovo force (KFOR) and agreed that NATO will 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 are preparing to hand over policing duties to the EU in September. 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 KFOR will not change and that KFOR "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.

[NRC Chairman's Statement](#) , [NRC website](#)



New Step in Strategic Airlift Capability Strategic airlift capability is a key requirement of meeting today's global security demands. 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. On June 12, Defense Ministers of the Strategic Airlift Capability nations met to review progress and plan for receiving the first aircraft in November 2008. 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](#)



Gates "Speaks from the Heart" to Spur NATO Nations on Afghanistan
Speaking to journalists at the Defense Ministerial in June, Secretary of Defense Gates related how he had set aside his prepared remarks in the North Atlantic

Council and had spoken "from the heart" to urge NATO Allies to do more in Afghanistan. Highlighting casualty figures and persistent troop and equipment shortfalls, Secretary Gates said that it is important that NATO Allies "live up to our pledges, in both civilian and military spheres, necessary for success in Afghanistan." In the press conference, the Secretary also addressed key NATO decisions on training Kosovo Security Forces and missile defense, as well as cooperation between NATO and Russia, and the importance of Pakistan as a "facilitator in terms of what we're trying to accomplish in Afghanistan."

[Secretary Gates Press Conference](#)



Ukraine Supports NATO-led Operations At the Bucharest Summit, NATO Heads of State made an important statement that Ukraine would one day become a member of NATO. The Alliance is currently in a period of intensive

engagement and cooperation with Ukraine on areas of defense and security-related issues and reform. 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. The next step towards NATO membership for Ukraine is the Membership Action Plan (MAP). The first assessment of Ukraine's progress toward MAP will be made by NATO Foreign Ministers in December 2008.

[NATO-Ukraine Commission Joint 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" that Ambassador Nuland 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."

Afghanistan Facts: Basic health services are now accessible for 85 percent of Afghans, up from 9 percent in 2003. And 81 percent of health facilities have at least one female doctor, nurse or midwife on staff.