

Transatlantic Focus

A USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter



UNITED STATES MISSION TO
NATO



NATO Defense Ministers Note Progress in Ukraine

On November 12-13, NATO Defense Ministers met in Tallinn, Estonia with leaders of Ukraine to discuss NATO-Ukraine relations and review the current security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area. The Ministers focused on Ukraine's capabilities to meet existing security challenges and to contribute to NATO-led operations. Defense Ministers also took stock of Ukraine's progress in transforming its national security structures and practices. This was the sixth Informal High-Level NATO-Ukraine Consultations with participation of Defense Ministers and other senior officials from Ukraine and NATO countries.

At the opening of the meeting, Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer noted that "there can be no denying that the Russia-Georgia conflict last August has changed the European security environment." He added that "a country's right to freely choose its security alignments is another important principle in this regard and a test for the Europe that we all seek to build. It is a principle that we will not compromise."

Speaking to the media after the meetings, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates acknowledged the progress that Ukraine has made and that "Ukraine currently participates in all NATO-led missions and continues to build expeditionary forces compatible with Alliance requirements and goals." He also emphasized that Ukraine must not rest on past achievements; it must speed the pace of security sector reform and show the sustained commitment required to join the Alliance.

Secretary Gates said his presence in Tallinn was meant to support the countries of the region who wish to more fully integrate with the West. "These nations are, quite understandably, on edge due to Russia's incursion into Georgia last summer," he said. He asserted that Russia has nothing to fear from these countries seeking closer ties to the West and that the U.S. prefers to work with Russia against common threats.

In closing, Secretary Gates reaffirmed America's "unwavering support for our Baltic partners and the NATO aspirations of Ukraine, as well as our abiding commitment to the principle of collective security on behalf of all Alliance members."

- [Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer Opening Remarks](#)
- [Secretary Gates Press Conference](#)

NATO



NATO-Ukraine Relations: Security Cooperation and Support for Reform

NATO and Ukraine actively cooperate in international peace-support operations and NATO supports Ukraine's ongoing reform efforts. In

1997, the [NATO-Ukraine Commission \(NUC\)](#) was established as the decision-making body responsible for developing the NATO-Ukraine relationship and for directing cooperative activities.

The leadership of Ukraine and Georgia have signaled their nations' desire to join the Alliance. In a historic decision documented in the [Bucharest Summit Declaration](#), all 26 NATO Allies agreed that Ukraine and Georgia will one day become NATO members. Currently, Ukraine and Georgia are in a phase of intensified engagement with NATO on defense and security-related issues and reforms.

In his [Bucharest speech](#), President Bush made clear the U.S. position: "NATO membership must remain open to all of Europe's democracies that seek it, and are ready to share in the responsibilities of NATO membership." [NATO-Ukraine Relations](#)



NATO Enlargement - The Door is Wide Open

Since NATO was created in 1949, the Alliance has gone through five different rounds of enlargement. Originally composed of 12 nations, NATO has grown to 26 members,

today. Enlargement is an on-going, dynamic process that is based on [Article 10 of the Washington Treaty](#), which states that membership is open to any "European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area." The most recent enlargement in 2004 brought Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia into the Alliance. At the April 2008 Bucharest Summit, Albania and Croatia were invited to join the Alliance and their accession protocols for membership are in the ratification process. All 26 NATO members must ratify the protocols before those two countries can join the Alliance. On October 24, the U.S. completed its ratification when President Bush signed the accession protocols for Albania and Croatia during a ceremony at the White House. [more](#)

Afghanistan



U.S. Committed to Afghanistan

"I think the United States, like all the international community, really remains very committed to Afghanistan," said Richard Boucher, Assistant Secretary

of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, during a recent trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Speaking to the press in Kabul, Assistant Secretary Boucher noted that while many difficult challenges remain, including security on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, he saw a lot of positive changes in important areas such as healthcare and education, roads, electricity and more capable Afghan army and police forces. [more](#)



Afghan National Army Hosts First Command Post Exercise

Enabling Afghan National Security Forces is a fundamental 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.

Steady progress is being made in training the ANA and a milestone was reached when the ANA, in conjunction with [Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan \(CSTC-A\)](#), conducted its first six-day command post exercise (CPX). Modern armies use CPX to improve operational capabilities and enable various command components to work together in a tight, fast-paced work environment. During this CPX, areas of emphasis included counter-insurgency training, humanitarian assistance, information operations and coordinating with the Afghan National Police. [more](#)



The U.S. strongly supports NATO enlargement. In his [testimony to Congress](#) in April, Assistant Secretary Fried said, "NATO's enlargement has been one of the most successful U.S.-led initiatives in the post-Cold War era, and it remains a driving force for aspirant nations to undertake difficult reforms. The United States will continue to provide leadership in enlarging the Alliance."



NATO's Operation Allied Provider Patrols Waters off Africa

The piracy threat off the coast of Somalia is a persistent security concern that threatens the delivery of vital humanitarian assistance to millions of people in Africa. On October 9, in response to a request from the UN Secretary General, NATO Defense Ministers agreed to provide naval escorts to World Food Program ships. Soon after, NATO ships began [Operation Allied Provider](#) off the coast of Somalia. [more](#)

Operation Allied Provider soon proved effective. On November 11, the HMS Cumberland of the UK's Royal Navy successfully warded off an attack by pirates who were attempting to take control of a commercial vessel off the Horn of Africa. Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer commended the crew of the HMS Cumberland and said, "this incident demonstrates NATO's determination to play its part in deterring piracy off the Somali coast, as the UN has asked us to." [more](#)

Kosovo



North Atlantic Council Visits Kosovo

On November 4, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) traveled to Kosovo to meet key leaders in Kosovo and the international community and to demonstrate NATO's on-going commitment to peace and stability in Kosovo. NATO currently has about 15,900 troops in Kosovo as part of the [NATO-led Kosovo Force \(KFOR\)](#). NATO Ambassadors met with KFOR commanders and visited different Multinational Task Forces within KFOR. Additionally, the members of the NAC met with Kosovo's leaders and leaders of the ethnic Serb community, as well as representatives of international organizations including the UN. [more](#)



Afghanistan: NATO's priority mission

[Video message by Ambassador Kurt Volker](#)

[Transcript](#)

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