

Transatlantic Focus

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UNITED STATES MISSION TO
NATO



NATO Foreign Ministers Meet in Brussels

On December 2-3, NATO Foreign Ministers met in Brussels to discuss NATO operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, the membership path for Georgia and Ukraine, and NATO-Russia relations.

Ministers reaffirmed the Alliance's long-term commitment to Afghanistan and condemned the deliberate targeting of civilians by insurgents. Ministers also welcomed the deployment of the [European Union's Rule of Law Mission \(EULEX\)](#) in Kosovo and underlined that the NATO-led [KFOR](#) mission would continue to provide assistance to the UN, EU and other international actors.

NATO Ministers reaffirmed the decision to offer membership to Georgia and Ukraine made at the [NATO Summit in Bucharest](#) in April, and agreed to provide further assistance to both countries as they implement reforms and move towards NATO membership.

Regarding Russia, Foreign Ministers expressed their continued concern about Russian actions and statements, particularly in relation to Georgia. While Ministers restated the Alliance's "no business as usual" policy towards Russia, which was adopted since the war in Georgia in August, they recognized the importance of NATO-Russia relations to Euro-Atlantic security and agreed to a measured and phased reengagement at an informal political level. During her press conference, Secretary Rice discussed international efforts to "welcome a new Russia into the Transatlantic space" and reiterated U.S. support for the gradual reestablishment of informal contacts between Russia and NATO.

- [Final Communiqué](#)
- [Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer Press Conference](#)
- [Secretary Rice Press Conference](#)

NATO



NATO Will Assist Georgia and Ukraine with Reforms

As tasked by Heads of State and Government at the [Bucharest Summit](#), Allied Ministers discussed progress made by Georgia and Ukraine towards meeting membership

requirements. During meetings of the [NATO-Georgia Commission \(NGC\)](#) and [NATO-Ukraine Commission \(NUC\)](#), Ministers reaffirmed the commitment to future membership made to those countries in Bucharest and concluded that both countries have made progress in reforms but that they have significant work left to do.

Allies decided to enhance opportunities to assist these countries in their reform efforts. Through a performance-based process, NATO will maximize its advice, assistance and support for their reform efforts in the framework of the existing

Commissions, and reinforce NATO information and liaison offices in Kyiv and Tbilisi. In addition, Annual National Programs will be developed to help each country advance their reforms and allow for formal annual Alliance review. [more](#)



- [Chairman's statement from the meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission](#)
- [Chairman's statement from the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission](#)



Mediterranean Dialogue Foreign Ministers Discuss Security and Piracy

NATO Allies consider peace and stability in the Mediterranean essential to their own security and, on December 2, NATO Foreign Ministers met with their [Mediterranean Dialogue \(MD\)](#) partners to discuss security in the region.

Piracy was a main topic of discussion. Ministers noted this global issue extends beyond the Gulf of Aden, and stressed the need for a more comprehensive international approach led by the UN Security Council. 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.

Afghanistan



NATO Foreign Ministers Reaffirm Commitment to Afghanistan

During a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on December 3, NATO Foreign Ministers reaffirmed NATO's long-term commitment to support the Afghan Government build a stable and democratic Afghanistan.

The Ministers stressed that the UN-mandated, NATO-led [International Security Assistance Force \(ISAF\)](#) is the key priority for NATO, and that they remain determined to provide ISAF with the forces, resources, and flexibility to ensure the mission's success. NATO Ministers condemned the deliberate tactics and actions by insurgents in complete disregard for human life, declaring in the [NATO Ministerial communiqué](#), "We deplore all Afghan civilian casualties." [more](#)



PRTs Provide Security for Afghan Reconstruction

[Provincial Reconstruction Teams \(PRTs\)](#) are small teams of civilian and military personnel working in Afghanistan's provinces to provide security for aid workers and help reconstruction work. They are a key component of a three-part strategy for Afghanistan—security, governance and development—helping to spread stability across the country. Currently, there are 26 PRTs operating throughout the country to assist the local authorities in the reconstruction and maintenance of security in the area.

Initially, PRTs operated under the U.S.-led coalition, however, the NATO-led [International Security Assistance Force \(ISAF\)](#) is taking responsibility for a growing number of PRTs.

Led by individual lead nations, the military components of PRTs come under the command of the [ISAF Commander](#). At the regional level, they are coordinated by the [Regional Commanders](#).



The Middle East Peace process is another key security issue in the MD region and Ministers Tzipi Livni of Israel and Abou Gheit of Egypt offered their insight into the follow up to the [Annapolis](#) process, as also did Secretary Rice and other NATO Foreign Ministers. While the Middle East peace process is not an issue currently on the NATO agenda, the discussion offered a very useful opportunity for an exchange of views with countries deeply involved in this process.



The Mediterranean Dialogue was launched in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council with the aim of contributing to regional security and stability through improved mutual understanding. Seven non-NATO countries currently participate in the MD: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Since 2004, the MD program has expanded from more than 100 activities to about 800 in 2008, 85% of which include military activities, in addition to Public Diplomacy, Civil Emergency Planning and Crisis Management. [more](#)

- [Mediterranean Dialogue Fact Sheet](#)



New NATO Members Thank Secretary Rice

The December 2008 meeting of Foreign Ministers was Secretary Rice's final visit to NATO in her capacity as Secretary of State. In remarks to journalists, she reflected upon the extraordinary eight years of her involvement with NATO, first as National Security Advisor and with the State Department, and noted how the Alliance has transformed itself since the end of the Cold War and enlarged. Referring to new members, Secretary Rice said, "They have really invigorated this Alliance. They have reminded us of our purpose in securing democracy as well as our security." Secretary Rice saw the successful enlargement of the NATO Alliance to include seven former Warsaw Pact states – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – and invitations to an additional two -- Albania and Croatia – who are expected to join in early 2009.

In recognition of her leadership and support for their countries' NATO aspirations, the nine Ambassadors gave Secretary Rice a group photo that each Ambassador signed and annotated with a note of gratitude. U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker presented the photograph to the Secretary.

One example of the many PRT successes is in Garmsir, Helmand province where a PRT has been maintaining security and working closely with local officials to establish the governance of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Recently the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) provided new, solar-powered, street lights for the bazaar area and the PRT provided the security. "Now, the bazaar can stay open longer, making the community feel safer. This creates jobs for the community and addresses the problem of economic insurgency," said Rear Admiral Borsboom the ISAF Deputy Commander for Stability. [more](#)



"Good Performers Initiative" Rewards Poppy-free Afghan Provinces

On December 4, [U.S. Embassy Kabul's](#) Charge d'Affaires Christopher Dell announced that the U.S. was transferring \$12.2 million to the Afghan Counter Narcotics Ministry as part of the [Good Performers Initiative](#). The Good Performers Initiative rewards provinces for success in reducing poppy cultivation, rewarding poppy-free provinces with millions in development projects. In partnership with the United Kingdom, the U.S. provided nearly \$38 million to this program in 2008, and expects to increase that amount in 2009.

In 2008, Afghanistan reduced poppy cultivation by almost 20 percent. Eighteen provinces were poppy free, and another nine provinces reported only a very small amount of poppy. Narcotics cultivation was mainly confined to five provinces in the south, where insecurity makes it difficult for the government to use law enforcement against narcotics.

During the ceremony, Charge d'Affaires Dell praised the Counter Narcotics Ministry for its progress and concluded by saying, "I urge the ministry to continue its hard work, and I urge you to reach out to the people to make them understand that lawful authority – and not the tyranny of the drug traffickers – represents the future of Afghanistan." [more](#)



A Way Forward on Georgia and Ukraine

[Video message by Ambassador Kurt Volker](#)

[Transcript](#)