

# Transatlantic Focus

## A USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter



### Defense Ministers Meet in Istanbul, Gates Pledges Help with IEDs and Calls for More Trainers



In the first meeting of NATO Allies and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) contributing countries since [President Obama committed 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan](#), Secretary of Defense Robert Gates met with his counterparts in Istanbul to discuss NATO reforms,

resources, and capacity. In a breakthrough that will increase the safety of U.S. and international troops overseas, [Secretary Gates pledged to Allies and partners increased access to information and equipment to counter improvised explosive devices \(IEDs\) in Afghanistan](#). As Allies have stepped forward to ensure ISAF commanders have the necessary troops to fight insurgents, the Secretary noted the additional need for more trainers and mentors for the Afghan police and army. As a senior U.S. official said, "this all about providing the capacity to build the Afghan forces so that we can transition responsibility to the Afghans and reduce our own investment in terms of troops, both the United States and our Allies."

[Informal Meeting of NATO Defense Ministers, Istanbul](#)  
[Secretary Gates Pledges Increased Support to Counter IEDs](#)  
[Secretary Gates Press Conference, Istanbul](#)  
[NATO Allies Agree on Budget Package](#)

**McChrystal: "We have made significant progress."** [ISAF Commander U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, also briefing journalists in Istanbul](#), said the current situation in Afghanistan was improving and spoke at length about Operation Moshtarak in Helmand. By speaking publicly about the operation, McChrystal said, "we're trying to signal to the Afghan people that we are expanding security where they live," and give insurgents there the opportunity to decide to lay down their weapons and to "see the inevitability that things are changing."



McChrystal said he had seen [improvements in training performance](#) for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), as well as in the recruitment of soldiers. However, he added, "we need to build programs both to try to recruit more people who have the skills, but also a number of programs we've already instituted to create literacy inside the force." He noted that the Afghan government is interested in ensuring both ethnic and geographic representation in the security forces. As Afghan authorities have sped up growth of the force, McChrystal noted, the need for trainers and mentors has increased.

[ISAF Commander McChrystal Press Conference, Istanbul](#)

### Kabul and Uruzgan Visit Inspires Optimism

"Cautious optimism" is how Ambassador Ivo H. Daalder described his read on Afghanistan in a blog entry about his recent trip to Afghanistan. The U.S. Mission's Afghanistan policy team visited Kabul and several provinces including Uruzgan and Nangahar, to gain a deeper understanding of how NATO can best support work on the ground.

The team, which was joined by Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Phil Gordon, spoke with civilian and military leaders, walked through a detention facility, and got an up-close perspective of civilian and military cooperation at the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Uruzgan. [Read Ambassador Daalder's blog posting](#) on DipNote, the State Department's official blog site.



### NATO's new Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan takes up role

**"Now we are called to address some of the greatest challenges in human history."**

[U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton](#) delivered a key speech on European security in Paris on February 3. In the speech, the Secretary outlined six core principles to guide Europe and the United States in building "a more peaceful, prosperous world" for our shared future: dedication to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, recognition that security in Europe must be indivisible, unwavering devotion to the collective defense and security of NATO Allies, commitment to practicing transparency in our dealings with Europe, belief that people everywhere have the right to live free from the fear of nuclear destruction, and recognition that true security entails not only peaceful relations among states, but opportunities and rights for the individuals who live within them.



[Read the speech](#)

### **The Euro-Atlantic Neighborhood: A Global Partnership**

[Ambassador Ivo H. Daalder](#) delivered a speech on NATO's partnerships at the Lithuanian parliament building in Vilnius. NATO's many partner countries have significantly contributed to the mission in Afghanistan, disaster-preparedness, air defense, arms control, and anti-piracy. The key principles of mutual responsibility and mutual benefit underlying our partnerships help ensure the long-term vigor and vibrancy of the North Atlantic Alliance. Amid global economic challenges, now more than ever, shared resources are making defense possible.

[Read the speech here](#)

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### **NATO Warship Saves Ship from Pirate Attack**

On February 5, a Danish warship patrolling the Gulf of Aden as part of NATO's [Operation Ocean Shield](#), foiled an attempt by pirates to hijack a Slovenian cargo ship. After receiving a distress signal from the ship's crew, Danish special forces stormed the ship and [freed 25 hostages](#). Speaking about the operation, LtCol Wolfgang Schmidt, spokesman for NATO Allied Command Operations in Lisbon, said that this action "demonstrates NATO's resolve to deter and disrupt piracy off the Horn of Africa."

### **Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia Meets on First Anniversary**

Meeting in New York on January 28, the [Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia \(CGPCS\)](#) celebrated its [one-year anniversary](#) by pledging to continue working to improve international cooperation and coordination to prevent piracy. Although piracy attacks continue, there has been a continued reduction in the rate of successful attacks off the coast of Somalia, and only two successful attacks in the Gulf of Aden in the past six months. Increased military activity and improved reconnaissance has led to the detention of some 90 pirates and the destruction of nearly 50 skiffs.

### **NATO's New Strategic Concept Discussed in Moscow**

In mid-February, [the Group of Experts on NATO's new Strategic Concept visited Moscow](#) at the invitation of the Russian Federation. The group, headed by Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State, engaged with Russian colleagues on the Alliance's future strategy. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Secretary of the National Security Council Nikolay Patrushev, and members of the Russian Duma participated in the discussions.



[Madeleine Albright Remarks at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Moscow](#) | [Video](#)

[Video: NATO-Russia Relationship: Common Challenges](#)

The visit is one in a series of consultations as the Group of Experts seeks input from NATO partner nations, government leaders, academics, and the public in drafting the new [Strategic Concept](#), NATO's core document establishing the Alliance's roles, missions, capabilities, and strategy to deal with the security challenges of the 21st century. [The final seminar for the Group of Experts will take place at the National Defense University in Washington, DC on February 23](#). Among those addressing the group will be NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

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