

Transatlantic Focus

A USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter

The United States Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

On June 10-11 NATO Defense Ministers gathered in Brussels to discuss details on a number of key Alliance priorities in the run up to the November Heads of State Summit in Lisbon. The meetings culminated in a twelve point declaration that highlights areas of progress and future focus.

[Read the Declaration](#)

[Visit the NATO Event Page for the Defense Ministerial](#)



Georgia Deploys 750 Additional Troops to Afghanistan

Defense Ministers from across the Alliance joined Defense Secretary Gates in applauding Georgia's recent deployment of 750 additional soldiers to Afghanistan. This represents a more than five-fold increase in the size of their contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In a meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission, the NATO body that provides the framework for cooperation between the Allies and Georgia, [NATO Defense Ministers reiterated their commitment to Georgia's aspirations for eventual Alliance membership](#). Georgian Defense Minister Bachana Akhalaia noted his government's progress in making vital

political, military and security-sector reforms. Georgia's reforms are a necessary step toward NATO membership.

[NATO-Georgia Commission](#)

[NATO-Georgia Relations](#)

[NATO Information Center in Georgia](#)



Defense Ministers Agree on Measures to Increase Efficiency

NATO Defense Ministers agreed on a path forward for [NATO administrative reform](#), which will be a central part of [NATO's New Strategic Concept](#). In this time of financial austerity for home nations, Defense Ministers agreed on what U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates described as "real

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reforms to achieve and create an effective and efficient alliance.” In a press conference following the Ministerial, Secretary Gates underscored that in the second decade of the 21st century, NATO must be “a lean but flexible organization, one that is affordable, scalable, and deployable.”

[Secretary Gates Press Conference](#)

[NATO Strategic Concept](#)

[Experts’ Report on NATO Strategic Concept](#)



NATO and Ukraine Continue Cooperation

Although the Ukrainian Parliament announced on June 3 that it will not pursue NATO membership, Ukrainian Defense Minister Mykhailo Yezhel assured the NATO-Ukraine Commission that [Ukraine will continue its active involvement as a NATO partner](#). NATO Defense Ministers utilized the NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting to [open a dialogue with Minister Yezhel on the future of Ukraine’s involvement with the Alliance](#). Ukraine was lauded by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates for its commitment to all four active NATO operations. NATO Defense Ministers pledged to continue to foster

practical cooperation with Ukraine through the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

[NATO-Ukraine Commission](#)

[NATO-Ukraine Relations](#)



Nations Committed to Success in Kosovo

In a meeting of the 37 nations contributing troops to the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), [NATO Defense Ministers agreed to remain in Kosovo as long as necessary to ensure peace and stability](#). Ministers noted improvements in the general security situation in Kosovo and agreed that the transition of KFOR into a smaller and more mobile force is proceeding in the right direction. Any decisions on further troop reductions, Ministers agreed, should be based on a military assessment of security conditions. In a June 10 press conference following the meeting, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen said, “...[the general trend continues to be in the right direction. Towards more security and more stability, and stronger local institutions.](#)”

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[KFOR](#)

[KFOR Troop Contributions by Country](#)



New Northern Supply Route to Afghanistan Open

NATO's cooperation with the Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan has opened up a [new northern route](#) to bring non-lethal rail cargo to Afghanistan by way of Uzbekistan. This new supply route will reduce the number of shipments to ISAF troops transported via more dangerous and expensive routes. While the U.S. and Russia have an existing agreement on transit routes that has allowed the U.S. to transport more than 14,000 containers, the newly implemented agreement on the Northern Supply Route opens the route to other ISAF contributing nations. The first train to use the route under the new agreement arrived in Afghanistan on June 9 from Riga, Latvia. [At a press conference](#), Secretary Gates told reporters that the new agreement would substantially improve NATO's ability to supply troops in the field.