

Transatlantic Focus

A USNATO Public Affairs Newsletter



UNITED STATES MISSION TO
NATO



NATO Defense Ministers Meet in Budapest

On October 9-10, NATO Defense Ministers met in Budapest to discuss NATO operations and Alliance capabilities. In response to a request from the Afghan government, Defense Ministers made a key decision to enable [ISAF](#) troops, working with their Afghan counterparts, to act against narcotics labs and traffickers and in effect cut off a major source of funding for the Taliban. Defense Ministers also agreed to provide Alliance ships to patrol the waters off Somalia, securing key shipping lanes from increasing piracy and, importantly, providing an escort to ships delivering food aid to thousands under the World Food Program.

In a brief ceremony during the two-day Ministerial, Ministers also marked the completion of an agreement on Strategic Airlift Capability that paves the way for the purchase of three C-17 aircraft and enhances the Alliance's ability to meet security requirements around the world.

At the first-ever meeting of the newly-established NATO-Georgia Commission, Defense Ministers reiterated the Alliance's firm support for Georgia's territorial integrity, and discussed providing guidance and advice to Georgia's armed forces. Ministers also reviewed the support that NATO has provided to help Georgia recover from its conflict with Russia, including civil emergency planning, and considered what more could be done. [more](#)

NATO Defense Ministers will meet again in Tallinn, Estonia on November 12-13.

Afghanistan



NATO Ministers Give ISAF "Green Light" to Target Drug Networks

On October 10, NATO Defense Ministers approved a proposal that will allow ISAF soldiers in Afghanistan to shut down drug networks that funnel money to

the Taliban. "I'm quite satisfied with the outcome on counter-narcotics – going after the networks of those who fund the Taliban," said U.S. Defense Secretary Gates. He emphasized that the Taliban is earning millions of dollars in drug trafficking profits each year, which is "corrosive to good governance" and directly finances those who are killing Afghan, U.S. and coalition soldiers. [more](#)



Secretary Gates: NATO is up to the Job in Afghanistan

NATO has proven it is up to the job in Afghanistan, and the Alliance is adjusting to changing situations in the country, Secretary Gates said, following a meeting of

representatives from countries that contribute troops to the effort in Afghanistan. [more](#)



General McKiernan Confirmed as Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan

On October 2, the U.S. Senate confirmed General David McKiernan as Commander of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. This command structure provides

NATO



Building a Stronger Transatlantic Community, and a Modern NATO

Speaking recently at the German Marshall Fund in Brussels, USNATO Ambassador Kurt Volker underscored the importance

of NATO enlargement and transatlantic unity. Using past successes as a guideline for NATO's future challenges, Ambassador Volker said that the Alliance must place the "highest emphasis on transatlantic unity" in order to fulfill the international need for a strong, modern NATO. The Alliance must pull "together as a strong transatlantic community, based on our shared values" to face the security challenges of the 21st-century.

- [Ambassador Volker's Remarks at the GMF](#)



Strategic Airlift Capability Moves to Implementation

Strategic airlift capability – the ability to rapidly move troops, equipment and resources around the world in response to security

needs – is imperative to meeting today's global security demands. One way that NATO is addressing this need is with the [Strategic Airlift Capability \(SAC\)](#) initiative which has pooled resources to acquire the necessary aircraft. These aircraft will be based in Papa, Hungary, and can be allocated for NATO, UN, or EU missions, including humanitarian airlift and disaster relief.

General McKiernan authority over most U.S. forces in Afghanistan, ensuring greater coordination in operational planning and execution. General McKiernan will continue to serve as Commander of ISAF. In a [White House Statement](#), President Bush said, "General McKiernan's new responsibilities will strengthen both U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan." [more](#)

Kosovo



Secretary Gates Reaffirms U.S. Commitment to Kosovo

On October 7, Secretary Gates visited Kosovo and congratulated its citizens on their progress in establishing the newest nation on earth. "I'm pleased to be here to congratulate your leaders in person and to re-emphasize our commitment to all of the citizens of Kosovo," he said. After meeting with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, Secretary Gates said that his discussions with Kosovo's leaders were productive. "We reiterated our commitment to maintain current U.S. troops levels under United Nations authority," he said. About 1,600 American troops are currently serving in Kosovo. [more](#)

In Kosovo, the UN-mandated NATO-led KFOR presence has been crucial in maintaining security. [KFOR](#), the NATO peacekeeping force, has been in Kosovo since June 1999, and currently numbers some 15,000 troops.

NATO-Georgia



NATO Ministers Reaffirm Support for Georgia

On October 10 in Budapest, the [NATO-Georgia Commission](#) met for the first time at Ministerial level since it was created. During the meeting, Defense Ministers discussed NATO's assistance to Georgia in recovering from the recent conflict in areas such as defense and security cooperation, security sector reform and airspace management. NATO Ministers also reaffirmed the Alliance's support for Georgia's territorial integrity and NATO aspirations. [more](#)

At the Defense Ministers meeting in Budapest on October 9, [NATO held a ceremony](#) marking the completion of the SAC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The completed MOU, now signed by all twelve SAC members, is a major step forward in the SAC program through which three C-17s will be acquired. The first aircraft is expected to be delivered in spring 2009, and the second and third aircraft are expected to arrive at the Papa airbase in Hungary in mid-2009. [more](#)



NATO Exercises: "Train as We Fight"

While individual NATO countries conduct exercises as a routine part of their preparation for operations, they also participate in Alliance-level exercises.

Frequent exercises ensure that Alliance forces are able to operate effectively in crisis situations and provide a venue for pursuing increased interoperability and defense reform with partners. [more](#)

Exercises "Cooperative Longbow 08" and "Cooperative Lancer 08" were launched on September 26 in Armenia, a member of NATO's [Partnership for Peace](#) (PfP) program. "Cooperative Longbow 08" brought officers from 17 NATO member-states, PfP countries and the NATO [Istanbul Cooperation Initiative](#) countries together to learn how to manage a security crisis. [more](#)

"Cooperative Lancer 08" is a field exercise involving 1,100 military personnel from 21 nations, twelve of which are PfP members. The exercise, which lasts until October 21, strengthens military interoperability by improving and exchanging light infantry skills as units while exercising in a variety of crisis response settings. [more](#)



Highlights from the NATO Meeting in Budapest

[Ambassador Volker Video Message](#)