
NATO REMAINS OUR ESSENTIAL ALLIANCE

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For NATO's summit in Istanbul and beyond, the United States envisions five ambitious goals: a call for troops and resources for a more vigorous NATO presence in Afghanistan; a defined role for NATO in Iraq; expanded practical engagement with the Greater Middle East; improved relations between NATO and the European Union; and to elevate and strengthen NATO's relations with Russia. The United States remains committed to NATO, the essential Alliance, and effective multilateralism in order to achieve the common European and American vision for a secure, peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future.

Originally created to shield Western Europe from Soviet communist aggression, the modern-day NATO has adapted to 21st century threats, transformed itself politically, acquired new military capabilities, and embarked on important new missions confronting the global terrorism threat on its front lines. For NATO's June summit in Istanbul and beyond, the United States envisions five ambitious goals for the 55-year old Alliance. This venerable multilateral institution remains a vital transcontinental bridge linking the United States and Canada to democracies in Europe and extending security across virtually two continents.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States and its allies have been engaged in a top-to-bottom rebuilding of NATO. At the Prague Summit in November 2002, the allies agreed on a blueprint to create a new NATO — different in mission, membership, and capabilities than the old Cold War institution. The results of our transformation efforts will be evident at NATO's Istanbul Summit in June 2004.

This epochal transformation has been occurring simultaneously with the Alliance's greatest enlargement since its founding in 1949. The Istanbul Summit will mark the first meeting of NATO's heads of state with 26 member nations. The addition to NATO of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia completed the greatest round of enlargement in NATO's 55-year history.

Those seven nations joined NATO in late March of this year, helping to consolidate the democratic revolution in the former Warsaw Pact countries. Their accession re-energizes the Alliance and reaffirms the importance of security as a condition for progress and prosperity. These new members of NATO, in the words of Latvian President Vaira Vike-Friberg, "know the meaning and the value of liberty. They know that it is worth every effort to support it, to maintain it, to stand for it, and to fight for it."

As important as NATO's political transformation has been its evolution from a defensive and static military alliance with a huge, heavy army massed to deter a Soviet threat to Western Europe. NATO's past focused inward on Cold War threats directed at the heart of Europe. NATO's future is focused outward on the challenges posed by global terrorist networks and, in particular, to the security of its members from the arc of instability that stretches from South and Central Asia to the Middle East and North Africa.

To meet those new threats, NATO is beginning to acquire modern military capabilities to produce a more deployable force — capabilities such as strategic airlift and refueling, precision-guided munitions, air-to-ground surveillance, and combat service support. Last summer, NATO created a new, leaner military command structure and a new Alliance Transformation Command in Norfolk to plug European allies into revolutionary new concepts in training, doctrine, and technology being pioneered

by the U.S. Joint Forces Command. Most significantly, the Alliance has also developed a flexible, agile, cutting-edge NATO Response Force (NRF) to which France has been a major contributor. The NRF is prepared for any mission — whether hostage rescue, humanitarian relief, response to terrorist attack, or high intensity conflict — deployable within days to wherever in the world it is needed, and sustainable once it gets there.

Today, NATO has more troops committed to missions at greater distances than ever before in its history. In addition to ongoing operations in Kosovo and Bosnia, and supporting the Polish-led multinational brigade in Iraq, NATO has embarked on a historic mission in Afghanistan, where it commands the U.N.-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul.

As we prepare for the NATO Summit in Istanbul and look to the future, the United States sees five goals for NATO. They constitute an ambitious agenda for our Alliance.

Our highest priority is helping the Afghan people rebuild their shattered country. NATO, which has command of the U.N.-mandated ISAF, must reinforce its long-term peacekeeping role in Afghanistan. The allies have agreed that we will move beyond Kabul to build a nationwide presence, and help the Afghan government extend its authority and provide security for nationwide elections. We are moving to create five new Provincial Reconstruction Teams. But NATO's success will depend on having the troops and military resources to do the job. The U.S. calls on European nations to contribute more troops and resources in order to construct a more vigorous NATO presence in Afghanistan.

Our second key goal is to examine how to set the stage for a greater NATO role in Iraq as President Bush has suggested. Recent events have clearly made this task difficult, but the proposal is supported by a large group of allies. After the interim Iraqi government assumes control on June 30, NATO allies will continue to serve as valued members of the coalition forces. NATO can offer something of inestimable value to help Iraqis make the great

transition from dictatorship to a democratic future. Defining such a mission will be a leading issue for NATO's heads of state to discuss at Istanbul in June and in the coming months.

Third, NATO should expand its engagement with the Arab world and Israel to help those countries find their way toward a more peaceful future in the Greater Middle East. The United States wants NATO to be one of the building blocks for our long-term engagement in this vast region. Recent Alliance consultations in the region have demonstrated some support for an enhanced relationship with NATO.

Long-term change in the Middle East will help to attack the foundations of the terrorism crisis and give democracy and civil society a chance to take root. This is a challenge that Europeans and Americans alike must embrace. We can transform NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue into a true partnership, offering military training and exercises and a closer political relationship, and also launch outreach to other countries in the region with the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Our focus should be on practical cooperation with those countries that wish to have a closer relationship with NATO.

Our fourth goal is to improve relations between NATO and the European Union (EU), the two great institutions responsible for Europe's future, particularly in the Balkans. The spring 2004 enlargements of both organizations have advanced our common goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Toward that end, both organizations will remain active in maintaining the hard-won peace and stability in the Balkans.

NATO will likely conclude its successful peacekeeping mission in Bosnia in December 2004, and support a new EU mission under the "Berlin Plus" framework agreed to by the two organizations last March. But NATO should maintain a robust presence and a military headquarters in Sarajevo to help Bosnian authorities bring indicted war criminals to justice.

In Kosovo, NATO will continue the KFOR (Kosovo Force) mission, maintaining the security and stability that Kosovo needs as it works on an internationally-

backed plan to expand democratic institutions, protect minority rights, return and reintegrate displaced persons, and open dialogue with Belgrade. If it makes sufficient progress by mid-2005, the international community will then consider beginning to address Kosovo's future status. Together, NATO and the EU must continue to support the transition to stable, market-oriented democracies in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia.

Our fifth goal is to elevate NATO's relations with Russia. Our constructive engagement through the NATO-Russia Council has helped make our citizenry safer and more secure today than at any time in the last 50 years. NATO and Russia will participate in a major civil emergency crisis management exercise in Kaliningrad in June. Yet there is much more NATO can do with Russia — from search and rescue at sea to theater missile defense to greater cooperation in the Black Sea to joint peacekeeping. NATO needs to set its sights on a closer relationship that will put our past rivalry behind us forever.

One more obstacle must be overcome if the Alliance is to achieve its goals: the persistent and growing gap in military capabilities between the United States and the rest of its allies. If NATO's transformation and long-term missions are to be successful, our European allies will need to spend more — and more wisely — on defense. The U.S. will spend \$400 billion on defense this year; the 25 other allies combined will spend less than half of that.

In addition, there is the “usability gap” — of Europe's 2.4 million men and women in uniform, only three percent are now deployed in our priority missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Forces that are static, untrained, ill equipped, and not deployable make no contribution to NATO or to the larger cause of peace and stability in Europe and beyond.

After terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, and later in Istanbul and Madrid, there is no doubt among NATO allies that our security is indivisible. The most dangerous security threats of our globalized 21st century are themselves global: sophisticated terrorist networks seeking access to weapons of mass destruction. President Harry Truman, who led the United States into NATO, could have been speaking of the present day when he said in 1951, “no nation can find safety behind its own frontiers ... the only security lies in collective security.”

That is sound advice for the U.S. role in today's NATO. The United States will remain committed to NATO and to effective multilateralism in our effort to repair transatlantic divisions and rebuild NATO for the future. Allied cooperation on issues of international peace and security helped NATO win the Cold War, and will be indispensable to winning the global war on terror. The new NATO remains our essential alliance for achieving the common European and American vision for a secure, peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future. ●