



NATO-Russia News 1/06

Allied and Russian defence ministers meet in Italy for informal talks

Russian naval officers complete their first training at sea for Operation Active Endeavour

A multinational strategic airlift agreement is signed

"NATO-Russia Rally" takes place in May

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what binds us together?



NATO-Russia Rally

2006 is an important year for Russia as it takes the helm of the G-8. It is also an important year for NATO, with a summit meeting coming up in November in Riga, Latvia. As Russia and NATO prepare for these major international events, they will soon be celebrating the fourth year of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). In this context, the 27 NRC nations have also committed to a public diplomacy campaign to engage more effectively with Russian civil society.

Despite a solid record of NRC achievements in the last four years, public opinion in Russia does not seem to be well informed of the level of cooperation achieved within the NRC. Past clichés remain deeply rooted among Russian people, among whom the overwhelming perception is that NATO is an “aggressive military bloc” or a military tool in the hands of American leadership. Old

stereotypes with regard to Russia are also perceptible in western societies, and present their own set of challenges to the deepening of NATO-Russia cooperation. While the leadership in our respective capitals took a leap of faith in 2002, triggering significant progress in bridging divides over the past four years, much more needs to be done to win people's hearts and minds. We must unite efforts to develop a higher degree of consensus behind the NATO-Russia partnership, and ensure that it remains relevant to new challenges in the evolving security environment.

In December 2005, NRC foreign ministers approved a major public diplomacy action in Russia. In support of the NATO Information Office in Moscow, 26 Allied embassies along with Russian government officials and local authorities are preparing for a “NATO-Russia Rally” from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad, which will take place from 11 to 26 May 2006. This project is essentially aimed at the regions of Russia, targeting young audiences from universities, in particular, as well as interested people who may not specialise in international affairs but wish to take part in an open debate. While it may often be presented as an information campaign, the idea of the Rally is to provide a forum for discussion where officials will listen as much as they will talk, and where the audience will be invited to engage in the debate. It will also be an opportunity to join in socio-cultural events, from exhibitions to concerts and sportive encounters.

The success of NATO activities and NRC initiatives can best be measured by the extent to which they serve the interests of citizens. Making the right choices is clearly the responsibility of our governments. But it is the task of responsible citizens — on the basis of adequate information — to judge for themselves, to take an active part in the discussion process and, when necessary, to challenge conventional thinking in a constructive way.

Readers will have an opportunity to join in and attend the Rally. Events are planned in Vladivostok (11 May), Novosibirsk (12 May), Yekaterinburg (13 May), Samara (15 May), Volgograd (17 May), Moscow (18 May), Murmansk (22 May), Pskov (24 May) and finally Kaliningrad (26 May). It is hoped that similar events will be organised in other NRC countries in the years to come.

For details of the NATO-Russia Rally's programme see: www.nato.int/russia

NATO-Russia defence ministers discuss priorities for 2006

NATO-Russia Council (NRC) defence ministers met informally in Taormina, Italy, on 10 February. They exchanged views on the state of NATO-Russia defence cooperation and on priorities for the rest of 2006 and beyond. Ministers also explored possibilities for additional NATO-Russia practical cooperation, and broadening and deepening of the NRC political dialogue. Speaking to the press afterwards, the NRC Chairman and NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, said the meeting had confirmed that “there is the political will to explore fresh avenues, to improve interoperability between our armed forces and to increase the intensity of military contacts.”

There is the political will to explore fresh avenues

The meeting came against a background of solid achievements in the NRC framework, including joint initiatives in the areas of airspace management and theatre missile defence, and a pilot training project to help counter the trafficking in Afghan narcotics. Of particular note is NRC cooperation in the fight against terrorism. This includes the exchange of intelligence and analysis, joint threat assessments in areas of interest to both Russia and NATO, a joint initiative to enhance cooperation in airspace control with the aim to improve capabilities to fight against air terrorism, and ongoing preparations by Russian naval forces for their contribution to NATO's maritime anti-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean, Operation Active Endeavour.

A Russian cruiser, the Moskva — which is serving as a platform for the training of Russian officers who will be taking part in Operation Active Endeavour later this year — was berthed at the port of Messina at the time of the meeting. During the spring, Allied and Russian personnel will complete a crucial phase of pre-deployment training, including at sea (*see next item*). After the meeting, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer accompanied Russian Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov



The Russian defence minister (centre) accompanies his Italian counterpart (right) and NATO's Secretary General (front left) on a visit to the Russian cruiser Moskva

on a visit to the ship, marking the significance of this step forward in NATO-Russia cooperation.

Ministers also discussed other ongoing NATO operations and missions including Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iraq, and Darfur, as well as current international security concerns such as energy security.

First NATO-Russia training at sea

Russian naval officers, who have been designated to participate in NATO's counter-terrorist maritime operation in the Mediterranean, successfully completed their first at-sea training period on 17 February. This training marked the beginning of Russia's active preparations for full integration in Operation Active Endeavour.

A five-man NATO training team embarked on the Russian cruiser, Moskva, a flagship of the Black Sea Fleet, at Sevastopol on 5 February. Their mission was to coordinate the training of personnel from the Black Sea Fleet headquarters and from the Russian ships that have been earmarked for future deployment to the Mediterranean in support of Active Endeavour, namely the Pytlivy and Smetlivy. The first phase of the training was held on board the Moskva during the ship's transit to Messina, Italy.

The second phase of the training was conducted in port and involved the establishment of secure military communications with NATO ships for the first time ever. The third and last phase of the training period took place after the Moskva left port on 14 February, when it was joined by two NATO frigates taking part in Active Endeavour, the Spanish frigate SPS Navarra and the UK destroyer HMS Nottingham, for exercises in the Ionian Sea. The Russian and NATO ships practised boarding and inspecting a suspect vessel and transferring its cargo as well as rehearsing joint manoeuvres, communications protocol and countering air and seaborne attacks.

Upon completion of the mission, the commander of the training team, Captain Sjoerd Both of the Netherlands Navy, praised the training as very successful. He noted that continued close cooperation and additional training at sea would be required to establish operational and procedural interoperability. However, he said that this first training period had demonstrated that Russian participation in Active Endeavour by late summer or early autumn was a realistic aim.

Over the coming months, the Allied naval command based in Naples, Italy, will work closely with the Russian Navy and Black Sea Fleet to facilitate interoperability between both forces. For effective Russian participation in Active Endeavour, interoperability must extend beyond joint manoeuvring to include

compatibility of systems, familiarisation with NATO standard procedures and the exchange of classified information.

Visiting the Moskva while it was berthed at Messina Jaap de Hoop Scheffer — the first NATO Secretary General to set foot on a Russian navy vessel — welcomed the beginning of the pre-deployment training. “Soon Russian vessels will patrol the Mediterranean side by side with NATO ships as part of an important anti-terrorism mission. NATO and the Russian Federation will together help to deter terrorism, and perhaps to deter smuggling of people or weapons. This is an excellent example of what NATO and Russia can do together to make our citizens safer.”



The Russian cruiser “Moskva” (forefront) training with NATO ships in the Ionian Sea

When Russian ships deploy in support of this operation later this year, it will be the first operational cooperation between NATO and Russia, since Russia withdrew from the NATO-led peacekeeping operations in the Balkans in 2003.



A Russian Navy officer climbs aboard a Spanish frigate, during the at-sea training conducted in the Ionian Sea in February

Strategic airlift agreement signed

Thanks to a multinational contract, Russian and Ukrainian Antonov aircraft are to be used as an interim solution to meet shortfalls in European strategic airlift capabilities, pending deliveries of Airbus A400M aircraft, expected to start in 2010.

On 23 January, 15 NATO countries signed a contract with Ruslan SALIS GmbH, a subsidiary of the Russian company Volga-Dnepr, based in Leipzig, Germany. The 15 original signatories — Canada, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland,

Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom — were joined by Sweden on 23 March.

The contract provides for two AN-124-100 aircraft on full-time charter, two more on six days notice and another two on nine days notice. This multinational arrangement allows the countries participating in the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) programme to meet commitments to strengthen capabilities in both the NATO and EU frameworks.

An interim solution to meet shortfalls in European strategic airlift capabilities

The contract's initial duration is for three years with a possibility to extend it further. The aircraft, which were made available from the beginning of February, are drawn from the Russian company, Volga-Dnepr, and Ukraine's ADB. The contract is administered by the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency and its operation is managed by the SALIS Coordination Centre in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. The countries concerned have committed to using the aircraft for a minimum of 2000 flying hours per year.

The SALIS plan evolved from the signing of a letter of intent to develop a multinational consortium to arrange for strategic airlift by NATO defence ministers in June 2003. Strategic airlift is a key capability enabling the rapid deployment of troops and equipment to where they are needed. In recent years, NATO's ongoing operation in Afghanistan, its logistical support to the African Union's mission in Darfur, and the earthquake disaster-relief operation for Pakistan have highlighted the need for strategic airlift which can handle oversized cargo. A single AN-124-100 can transport up to 120 tons of cargo.

Volga-Dnepr and ADB already provide AN-124-100 aircraft to support the Afghanistan mission, with weekly sorties from Germany to Afghanistan and back, under contractual arrangements with the Allied Movement Coordination Center at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. Moreover, a memorandum of understanding on strategic airlift between NATO and Ukraine is pending ratification with the Ukrainian



Antonov cargo aircraft were used for NATO's Pakistan earthquake relief operation

parliament. Similarly, a framework agreement on air transport and the necessary implementing arrangements is being developed with Russia. Progress on the air transport agreement with Russia is dependent on the ratification by the Russian parliament of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), signed by the Russian foreign minister in April 2004. The SOFA provides a reciprocal legal framework for the treatment of NATO and Partner troops, including Russian troops, operating in or transiting through one another's territory, covering issues related to documentation, juridical questions, taxation, customs and other technical details.

Protecting vital points

A roundtable discussion on protecting vital points by area surveillance took place at NATO Headquarters on 1 February. The event brought together officials from NATO-Russia Council (NRC) countries, experts from NATO agencies and Russian ministries, as well as representatives from industry. A wide range of presentations focused on two broad themes: the nature of the surveillance market and promising technologies for potential NATO-Russia industrial cooperation.

The roundtable was organised by the NRC working group on defence reform. In his opening remarks, the chairman of this working group, Marshall Billingslea, who is also NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment, pointed out that vital points or critical infrastructure include areas such as agriculture, food and water, public health, emergency services, transportation and shipping, energy sources, information and telecommunications, the chemical industry and hazardous materials. A terrorist attack on vital points in such areas could cause major disruption, so there is a need to identify threats and reduce the vulnerability of such points and minimise damage and recovery time. This calls for national and international coordination and cooperation among government bodies and agencies, private industry and academia. An important consideration in examining surveillance technologies is the need to respect the principle of individual liberty.

A terrorist attack on vital points could cause major disruption

A follow-up roundtable discussion, which focused more specifically on the surveillance and protection of energy infrastructure, was hosted by the Russian ministry of industry and energy in Moscow on 25 April. Participants were also invited to visit the 7th "International Forum on High Technologies XXI", which took place in Moscow from 24 to 27 April.

Counter-narcotics training

On 29 March, at a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, ambassadors reviewed progress in the implementation of the NRC Pilot Project on Counter-Narcotics Training of Afghan and Central Asian Personnel, which NRC foreign ministers launched in December 2005. The pilot project is aimed at mid-level officers from relevant agencies in Afghanistan and Central Asia, who will be offered training by NRC counter-narcotics experts. Its objective is to complement existing international efforts aimed at combating trafficking in Afghan narcotics and to contribute to the development of a regional counter-narcotics culture.

The pilot project is to be implemented by the United Nations Organisation on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in coordination with an NRC Executive Steering Committee composed of the NRC countries contributing to the pilot project. Currently, preliminary organisational arrangements are in the process of being completed, and training courses are expected to begin in the second half of the year. As the details of the implementation of the pilot project are being finalised, the NRC and the UNODC are also maintaining regular consultations with Afghanistan and the other Central Asian countries, which will benefit from the proposed training.

Winter Academy

The eighth Winter Academy for students sponsored by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division was organised by the Centre for European Security, in Moscow from 20 to 25 February. The event, which was held for the first time at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RGGU), was devoted to the theme of how today's NATO-Russia Council (NRC) is facing tomorrow's threats. It brought together a number of Russian and NATO officials, various experts and academics, and a select group of students from Russia and Allied and Partner countries. The ambassadors to Russia of four Allied countries — Denmark, France, the United Kingdom and the United States — also addressed participants.



Students, experts and officials discuss how the NATO-Russia Council is facing tomorrow's threats

During the course of the week, presentations and discussions covered a wide range of topics ranging from themes such as “NATO-Russia: perceptions and reality” to “NATO's institutional partnerships”, to other areas of interest in the framework of the NATO-Russia relationship including the broader Middle East, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Caucasus. A full day was devoted to a simulated situation game. The closing day focused on NRC military-to-military cooperation as well as on a discussion of what Russia and NATO get out of their relationship, respectively.

Scientific cooperation

A meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Science Committee was held at NATO Headquarters on 10 March. The Committee welcomed the new Russian representative, Alexander Khulunov, who is Director of the Department of Science and Innovation Policy of the Ministry of Education and Science. He briefed the Committee on recent developments in the Russian science and technology strategy, highlighting the importance Russia attaches to international cooperation in this area.

During discussions on the implementation of the Committee's programme of work, a presentation was made on the outcome of the workshop on "Stand-off detection of suicide bombers and mobile subjects", which was held in Germany in December 2005. It is proposed that three types of technology be developed in this area and that these be the subject of three projects under the Science for Peace programme, which focuses on promoting applied research and development projects with NATO's Partner countries. Cybersecurity was another key item discussed, following the expert meeting on this topic, which took place at NATO Headquarters on 28 February. Six workshops are proposed to explore further different aspects of cybersecurity.

The Committee was also informed of the ongoing initiative to restructure NATO's Science Committee and its Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, which could lead to the creation of a new committee replacing the two existing committees by October. The restructuring is motivated by the rapid evolution of the global security environment which has led to the emergence of common priorities in the two committees, as well as by the desire for a simplified and integrated structure. In due time, the NRC's Science Committee and its Committee on Challenges to Modern Society could also be restructured to mirror the changes in the NATO structure.

New NATO contact point

A new NATO contact point was opened on 20 February at the Moscow State Linguistic University (MSLU). Known as the Centre for International Security, it will serve as a resource centre for MSLU students and faculty as well as for other Moscow-based researchers interested in studying international security issues and in making use of NATO publications and computerised access to security-related information sources.

This new Centre is the second NATO contact point to be opened in Russia with the assistance of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division and the support of the Russian ministry of foreign affairs. The first Centre was opened in Volgograd in June 2005. Other contact points will be established in the coming years as part of NATO's public diplomacy efforts in

Russia, aimed at improving understanding of NATO, raising visibility for the activities of the NATO-Russia Council and promoting awareness of wider security issues.

NATO-Russia News aims to highlight different aspects of NATO's cooperation with Russia. It is based on *Novosti NATO*, a quarterly newsletter for audiences in Russia, which is published in Russian.

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Further information on NATO-Russia relations is available at:
(in English) www.nato.int/issues/nato-russia
(in Russian) www.nato.int/russia

In Russia, further information and publications are available from:

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