

Doha meet stresses NATO-GCC ties

NATO hopeful of forging links with more Arab states, says deputy secretary-general

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DOHA Top officials of Qatar's armed forces and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) took part in a seminar here on Monday with the aim of "exchanging expertise between NATO members and Gulf countries through a transparent dialogue".

The one-day seminar, hosted at the Doha Sheraton hotel, was attended by the Chief of Staff of Qatar's armed forces Maj Gen HE Hamad bin Ali al Attiyah, NATO Deputy Secretary-General Claudio Bisogniero and Air Commodore Abdul Aziz Abdullah al Mahmoud, who is the commander of the Armed Forces Strategic Studies Centre.

"NATO has given GCC countries the opportunities to benefit from the experience of its 26 members through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), launched in 2004.

"Gulf countries may choose their area of cooperation, such as peacekeeping, crisis management, training and education, in order to improve the capacities of their armed and security forces," al Mahmoud said in his address.

Al Attiyah praised NATO's role in the region, saying, "Given the strategic location, as well as their large oil and gas reserves, Gulf countries cannot compromise on security. We really appreciate the role of NATO in preserving peace in the world, especially in the Gulf."

He added, "We hope that Qatar's armed forces will benefit from NATO's experience to improve their capabilities in environmental security and combating piracy."

Bisogniero emphasised the importance of NATO's relationship with Middle Eastern and Gulf countries, emphasising that the security of the countries in the region matters to NATO.

"Nowadays, NATO has to deal with a volatile security environment, including terrorism, religious extremism, trans-national crime and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. To respond to the challenges, the alliance was obliged to adopt a new approach, which included not just defending its members' borders but also serving international peace and security," he said.

"The political consultations



NATO Deputy Secretary-General Claudio Bisogniero (left) with Chief of Staff of Qatar's armed forces Maj Gen HE Hamad bin Ali al Attiyah at a seminar at the Doha Sheraton hotel in the city on Monday. (JALAL PATHIYOOR)

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