

NATO's Military Committee

focused on operations, capabilities, and cooperation

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The International Military Staff (IMS)

The IMS supports the Military Committee, with about 400 dedicated military and civilian personnel working in an international capacity for the common interest of the Alliance, rather than on behalf of their country of origin. Under the direction of the Director, Dutch Lt.-Gen. Jo Godderij, the staff prepare assessments, evaluations and reports on all issues that form the basis of discussion and decisions in the MC.

The IMS is also responsible for planning, assessing and recommending policy on military matters for consideration by the Military Committee, and for ensuring their policies and decisions are implemented as directed. This staff is the essential link between the decision-making bodies of the Alliance, the two Strategic Commanders, national military delegations from NATO and Partner countries working in Brussels, and the civilian International Staff that support the Secretary General and the North Atlantic Council.



NATO soldiers from the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team in discussion with Afghan elders in the Zharey District (June 07)



Afghan children from the village of Sayad Pacha in southern Afghanistan, use a water pump funded by the military's civil-military cooperation section.

The Military Committee oversees several operations and missions including the:

- ▶ International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (**ISAF**). NATO now is operating throughout Afghanistan with about 33,000 of the 40,000 military personnel there under its command. ISAF has responsibility for, among other things, the provision of security, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and training the Afghan National Army.
- ▶ Kosovo Force (**KFOR**). Since June 1999 NATO has led a peacekeeping operation in Kosovo. Initially composed of 50,000 following the March 1999 air campaign, the force now numbers about 16,000.
- ▶ Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR (**OAE**), the Alliance's only current Article 5 mission, with almost 1900 personnel conducting naval patrols, hailings and, boardings in the Mediterranean Sea to counter terrorist activity.
- ▶ Training Mission - Iraq (**NTM-I**) with more than 100 personnel assisting in the training of security forces and the coordination of training and equipment offers.
- ▶ NATO also provides logistical support to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).
- ▶ More than 100 NATO military personnel in Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana and Belgrade also assist with defence and security reform.



Operation Active Endeavour is NATO's maritime surveillance and escort operation in the fight against terrorism. Based in the Mediterranean Sea, the force, which is provided by several nations, including for a time by Russia, has hailed more than 50,000 vessels.



International Military Staff

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Six functional areas of the IMS

Plans and Policy

Responsible for strategic level plans and policies, and defence/force planning, including working with nations to determine national military levels of ambition regarding force goals and contributions to NATO.

Operations

Closely tracks current operations, staffs operational planning, follows NATO exercises and training, and responsible for issues involving NATO air defence.

Cooperation and Regional Security

Main military contact with the 23 Partners in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC), the 7 nations in the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), the 4 of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), and with other non-member, non-Partner countries with whom NATO has relations or contact.

Logistics and Resources

All matters concerning logistics, armaments, research and development, medical, civil emergency planning, and management of Alliance military financial resources and personnel.

Intelligence

Provides strategic intelligence support, including gathering, assessing and distributing intelligence received from member countries and NATO commands.

NATO Consultation, Command and Control

Gives advice on communications and information systems, standards, products, and analysis.



The Military Committee (MC)

NATO's highest military authority is composed of the chiefs of defence of all 26 member countries. They meet at least three times a year as a group. On a day-to-day basis, their work is carried out by permanent military representatives, mainly of three-star rank, at NATO HQ in Brussels. They meet one to four times a week in formal and informal sessions to discuss, deliberate and act on matters of military importance, working in the best interests of the Alliance, at the same time representing national perspectives and positions.

The MC provides the North Atlantic Council, NATO's highest political authority, with consensus-based military advice - that is, advice agreed to by all chiefs of defence. It works closely with the two Strategic Commanders¹ to bring plans, issues and recommendations forward for political consideration. In turn, it gives clear military direction to the Strategic Commanders based on MC and North Atlantic Council decisions.

The MC represents a tremendous amount of specialised knowledge and experience that informs Alliance-wide military policies, strategies and plans, and is a key part of the NATO decision-making process.

¹ The overall planning and direction for all NATO operations rests with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), who works from Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) headquarters in Mons, Belgium. Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), working from Norfolk, U.S., is responsible for enhancing NATO military capabilities, developing concepts, policies, and joint NATO training.

The Role of the Chairman

The Chairman of the Military Committee is elected by the NATO chiefs of defence, normally for a three-year term. He represents their consensus-based views as the principal military adviser to the Secretary General, the North Atlantic Council and other senior NATO organisations. He guides the Committee's agenda and deliberations, listening to views and working to reconcile divergent national positions or policy differences to fashion advice that all can agree to. Each nation has an equal voice in the discussion and decisions, as all member nations provide the personnel and the financial resources needed to conduct its operations and other activities.

As the Alliance's top officer and most senior military spokesperson, Canadian Gen. Ray Henault, the current Chairman, regularly visits operations and allied and partner countries to explain NATO's role and military work, and to maximize NATO military capabilities and efficiencies. He is assisted by the Deputy Chairman, U.S. Lt.-Gen. Karl Eikenberry.



The Military Committee meets with General Ehsan ul Haq, Pakistan Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to discuss the ISAF mission in Afghanistan and to learn first-hand the efforts by Pakistan's military to secure the border (Nov 2006).



Gen. Ray Henault, Chairman of the Military Committee, speaks about the ISAF mission with a British officer in the Sangin Valley, in the south of Afghanistan, during a recent visit.



NATO's chiefs of defence meet at least three times a year, and on a day-to-day basis work through permanent military representatives based in Brussels. When their Partnership for Peace colleagues join for meetings, as many as 49 senior officers representing almost 1,500 years of military experience tackle defence and security issues common to all.

Six steps to agreed military advice

When NATO political authorities are considering military action, such as the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, a critical part of the information needed to make informed decisions that all nations can agree to, comes from its military authorities. The North Atlantic Council receives regular briefings and reports, and at each key stage the Military Committee is called on to give advice, and to provide direction to NATO Military Authorities.

Step ①. The North Atlantic Council tasks the Military Committee to produce military advice that can be agreed by all 26 NATO chiefs of defence.

Step ②. The International Military Staff, in support of the Military Committee, translates the political guidance into military direction and tasks one or both Strategic Commands for their best military advice on how to organise and conduct what has been asked for, including an assessment of the personnel and financial resources required.

Step ③. The input from the Strategic Command(s) is provided to the Military Committee (i.e. to the nations) for consideration, usually with an initial assessment by the International Military Staff.

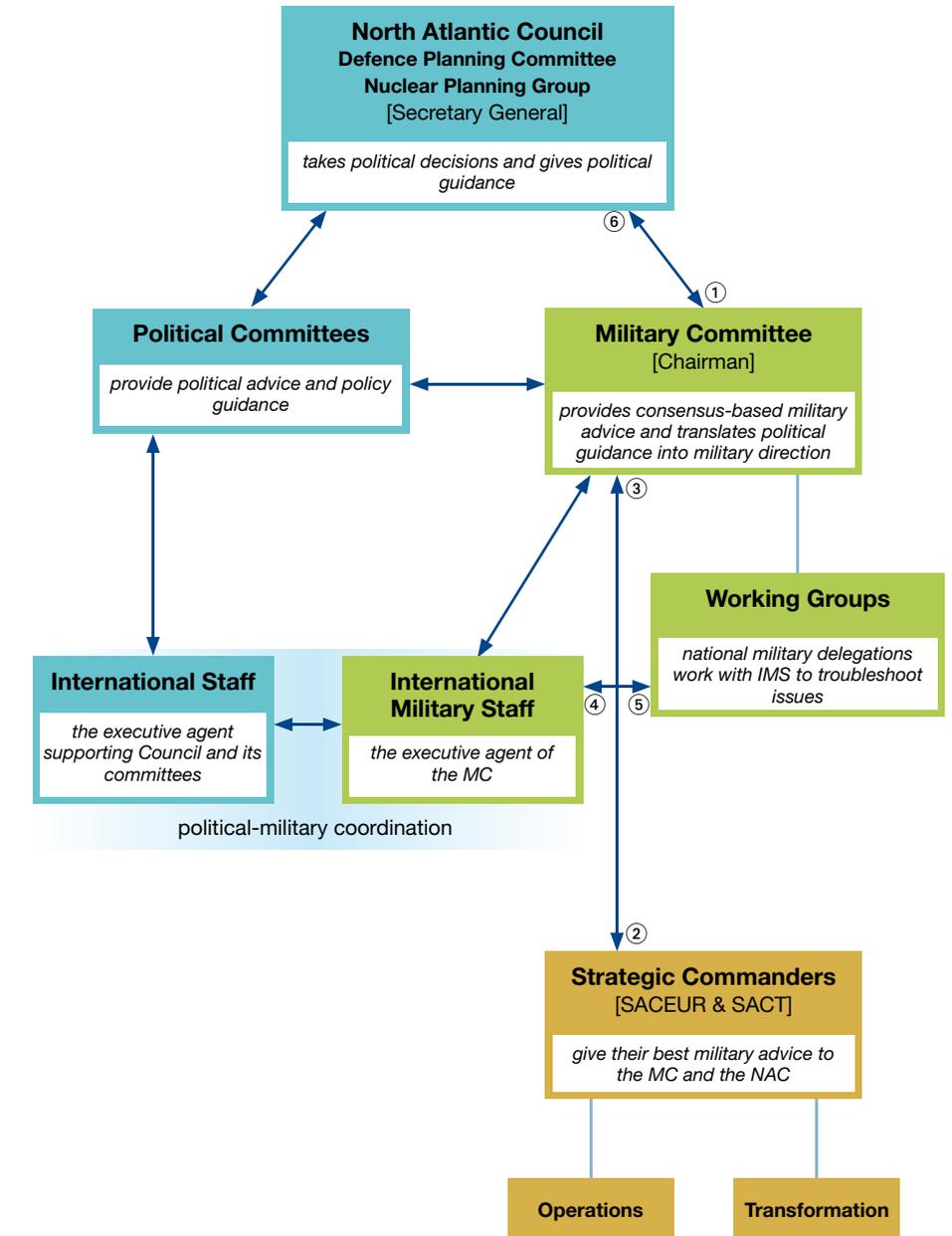
Step ④. The Military Representatives provide their response and advice from a national standpoint. 26 views need to converge into consensus advice that can be passed to the North Atlantic Council.

Step ⑤. Consensus is rarely immediately achieved on complex undertakings, and working groups meet regularly to troubleshoot and work through issues. Staff from national military delegations work under an IMS chairman and with subject matter experts.

Step ⑥. The final agreed product, plus the initial advice from the Strategic Command(s), is then sent to the North Atlantic Council to inform their deliberations, consultations and decision-making.

This is a continuous process for every activity, be it an operational plan, a conceptual paper or a policy proposal.

How military decisions are arrived at in NATO



Two-way arrows show continuous circle of consultation and guidance.