

NATO Response Force (NRF)

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The NATO Response Force (NRF) is a highly ready and technologically advanced multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly to wherever it is needed. It was first declared operational in 2003.

The NRF has three main elements:

- a military Headquarters to exercise command and control;
- a “ready-to-go” Immediate Response Force: a joint force of up to 13,000 high-readiness troops provided by Allies;
- a Response Forces Pool of around 15,000 follow-on forces, which can supplement the Immediate Response Force when necessary.

A Powerful Package

The Immediate Response Force is made up of:

- a brigade-sized land component (around 3,000 - 5,000 soldiers) including supporting elements;
- a maritime component based on NATO’s Standing Naval Maritime Groups and Standing Naval Mine Counter Measures Groups;
- a combat air and an air support component ;
- special forces;
- a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence task force.

Operational Command

The decision to use the NATO Response Force is a consensual political decision, taken on a case-by-case basis by all 28 Allies in the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s top decision-making body. As with every NATO operation, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe has operational responsibility for deployed NATO forces. Operational command of the NRF alternates between NATO’s two Joint Force Commands in Brunssum and Naples.

A Rotational Force

The NRF is based on a rotational system. NATO Allies commit land, air, naval or special forces units to the Immediate Response Force for up to 12 months. For every mission, the force package will be adjusted in size and capabilities to match the demands of the specific task.

Participation in the Immediate Response Force is preceded by national preparation, followed by joint training with other participants in the multinational force. A major exercise is also held every year to certify the readiness of NATO’s Joint Force Command to make sure they are able to command the NRF.

Exercise STEADFAST JAZZ will take place in November 2013 to certify next year’s operational NRF headquarters.

All Allies contribute to the NRF, both through the NATO Command Structure and forces allocated to the NRF. In 2013, 25 Allies are providing military forces to the NRF. Next year’s NRF is currently being put together. Indications are that up to 19 Allies will commit forces.

Partner contributions

The NRF is open to Partner country participation. In 2013, Finland and the Ukraine have committed troops to the NRF. Contributions by Partners are additional to those made by Allies and do not replace assets provided by Allies.

Any Mission, Anywhere.

The NRF's purpose is to be able to provide a rapid military response to an emerging crisis, whether for collective defence purposes or for other crisis response operations. The force gives NATO the means to respond swiftly to various types of crises anywhere in the world.

In the past, elements of the NRF helped protect the 2004 Summer Olympics in Greece, and deployed to support the Afghan presidential elections in 2004. NRF elements have also supported disaster relief operations in Pakistan in 2005-2006 and in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in the United States in 2005.