

NATO-Russia practical cooperation

The NATO-Russia Council (NRC), which was created in 2002, is the unique body where the 28 NATO Allies and Russia meet as equals. The NRC provides a framework for consultation on current security issues and practical cooperation in a wide range of areas of common interest.

Afghanistan

Since December 2005, the NRC has been running a project to train counter-narcotics personnel from Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Central Asian countries. The project aims to bolster the capacity of national authorities to fight the trade in narcotics originating in Afghanistan. As of October 2013, the project had trained around 3,000 officers from the seven participating nations.

In 2011, the NRC agreed to launch a Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund, which provides maintenance and repair capacity, including the provision of spare parts and technician training, to the Afghan Air Force (AAF) helicopter fleet. The goal of the programme is to bolster the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force to operate its fleet of Russian-made helicopters more effectively.

A first group of technicians started their training in Russia in April 2013 and as of September 2013 some 40 Afghan personnel had received training under the project.

On 23 April 2013, the NRC launched the second phase of the Trust Fund to provide training to technicians on more types of helicopters and in developing the Afghan Air Force's medical evacuation capabilities. Some 20 Afghan personnel are scheduled to be trained in late 2013 and 2014 during this phase.

Since 2008, Russia has facilitated the land transit of non-military equipment for ISAF contributors across Russian territory in support of the ISAF mission. In 2012, NATO and Russia signed an arrangement to expand transit to and from Afghanistan and to include transport by air, road and rail via the Ulyanovsk commercial transit hub.

Fight against terrorism

Cooperation between NATO and Russia on counter-terrorism measures was launched in 2004 as a way to improve overall coordination and strategic direction of cooperation in this area. An updated NATO-Russia Council Action Plan on Terrorism was agreed in Berlin in 2011. The action plan establishes the way by which NATO nations and Russia regularly exchange information and conduct consultations on various aspects of counter-terrorism policy.

NRC nations are working on a project to develop technology that will enable the detection at a distance of bombs in mass transport locations, known as the Stand-off Detection of Explosives project (STANDEX). A series of trials in a European metro took place in May 2013. This project, aimed at technology development, is to conclude at the end of October 2013. A follow-on project, building on the achievements and lessons learned from the first, is currently being prepared.

Russia has also provided ships to Operation Active Endeavour, NATO's maritime counter-terrorism operation in the Mediterranean.

An information exchange system has been developed through the Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI) to provide early notification



Polish aircraft manoeuvring during Exercise Vigilant Skies 2013
(photo: Polish Ministry of Defence)



The Italian Ship San Marco, the NATO flag ship to Operation Ocean Shield, maneuvers on the port (left) side of the Russian Federation ship Severomorsk during a joint counter piracy exercise on 26 February 2013 in the Gulf of Aden.

of suspicious air activities to help prevent terrorist attacks. The CAI moved into the operational phase in December 2011 and involves sharing information and agreed response procedures to deal with possible terrorist incidents involving civilian aircraft. A live exercise, Vigilant Skies 2013, conducted in September 2013 saw aircraft from Poland, Russia and Turkey working together to successfully tackle simulated terrorist threats.

The NRC organized a first counter-terrorism tabletop exercise at NATO headquarters on 26-27 March 2012. The exercise, which involved the participation of over 70 civilian and military personnel from NRC nations, was designed to test the ability of NRC nations to coordinate their responses to a terrorist attack. The exercise contributed to building awareness of counter-terrorism roles and procedures within NRC nations, helping to identify challenges and share best practices.

Counter piracy

NATO and Russia are working together to combat piracy at sea by sending ships to the Horn of Africa area and the Gulf of Aden to protect shipping. Since late 2008, Allied and Russian ships have been developing cooperation at the tactical level, including through exercises. NRC foreign ministers in December 2011 endorsed a plan to enhance interoperability and logistical cooperation in the fight against piracy. NRC members are also looking at possible mutual support in the areas of re-fuelling and medical assistance for ships involved in counter-piracy operations.

Missile defence

At the 2010 Lisbon Summit, NRC leaders agreed to discuss pursuing cooperation on territorial missile defence – the protection of populations and territory as well as deployed forces. In 2003, NATO and Russia began examining the potential for cooperation on Theatre Missile Defence (TMD – the protection of deployed forces). Since then, they have held 5 simulation exercises. The latest, a computer-assisted exercise, was held from 26-30 March 2012 in Germany. The aim of the exercise was to develop, explore and assess various options for conducting missile defence in Europe.

NRC nations are currently exploring the possibility of cooperation on the disposal of excess munitions.

For further information on cooperation within the NATO-Russia Council, visit www.nato.int and www.nato-russia-council.info.

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