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NATO AFTER RIGA

Prevailing in Afghanistan, Improving Capabilities, Enhancing Cooperation

The Riga Summit that took place on 28 and 29 November 2006 was a significant event for NATO. Heads of state and government of NATO's 26 member countries gathered for the eighth time since the end of the Cold War and the first time in a capital of one of the latest wave of new NATO members. As NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer put it, "nothing could demonstrate more clearly how much Europe has changed for the better, than the fact that this Summit is taking place here in a Latvia that is democratic and a Latvia that is free."

In the Latvian capital, Allied leaders strengthened their commitment to NATO's Afghanistan mission and called for broader international engagement. They took measures to further improve NATO's military capabilities and endorsed initiatives to deepen and extend relations with partners. In this way, the Alliance showed its ability to adapt to meet the new security challenges of the 21st century.

At Riga, NATO leaders endorsed the Comprehensive Political Guidance, a major policy document that sets out the priorities for all Alliance capability issues, planning disciplines and intelligence for the next ten years and beyond. The Guidance, which supports the Alliance's 1999 Strategic Concept, recognises that for the foreseeable future, the principal threats to the Alliance are international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, as well as instability caused by failed or failing states; regional crises; misuse of new technologies; and the disruption of the flow of vital resources.

Against this background, the Guidance sets out the kinds of operations that the Alliance must be able to perform and the kinds of capabilities it will need: NATO's forces must remain balanced, flexible and agile, able to conduct the full range of missions, from low to high intensity. The Guidance also emphasises the likelihood that NATO will need to carry out a greater number and range of smaller operations.

At the time of the Riga Summit, the Alliance was involved in six missions and operations on three continents: the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan; the Kosovo Force (KFOR); Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean; NATO Headquarters – Sarajevo; the NATO Training Mission in Iraq; and support to the African Union Mission in Sudan. During their meeting, Allied leaders paid tribute to soldiers who have served in these missions and the more than 50 000 men and women involved at the time. They also observed a minute of silence in recognition of the injured and the fallen.

> Continued commitment to Afghanistan and Kosovo

The Riga Summit began with a working dinner on 28 November which was mainly devoted to NATO's key priority: contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Allied leaders reaffirmed their solidarity and long-term commitment to this objective and agreed to remove national caveats on how, when and where forces can be used to further strengthen the effectiveness of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force. NATO leaders also reconfirmed that, regardless of the remaining caveats, in an emergency situation every Ally will come to the aid of the forces that require assistance. A number of countries also pledged additional assets, including fighter aircraft, helicopters, infantry companies and training teams to mentor the Afghan National Army.

Recognising the importance of reconstruction and development to Afghanistan's long-term stability, NATO leaders called for broader international engagement and a comprehensive approach including political, military and economic elements. "There can be no security in Afghanistan without development, and no development without security," they stated in the Summit declaration. NATO leaders welcomed proposals for a Contact Group that would bring key stakeholders together to discuss and agree on important strategic issues. The Secretary General was tasked to develop this proposal further.

Allied leaders also discussed the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) and confirmed the Alliance's preparedness to play its part in implementing the security provisions of a settlement

on the status of Kosovo. NATO leaders made clear that, as in Afghanistan, success in Kosovo will depend on a concerted effort. Accordingly, NATO activity to provide a secure environment will continue to be coordinated with the activities of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to build governance and support reform.

> Fully operational NATO Response Force

Allied leaders announced at Riga that the NATO Response Force (NRF) had reached its full operational capability. The technologically-advanced force is made up of land, air, sea and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly wherever needed. It is capable of performing missions worldwide across the whole spectrum of operations, including evacuations, disaster management, counterterrorism, and acting as an initial entry force for larger, follow-on forces. It can number up to 25 000 troops and start to deploy after five days' notice and sustain itself for operations lasting 30 days or longer if re-supplied.

The Secretary General described achieving full operational capability for the NRF as “a major accomplishment because it gives the Euro-Atlantic community unprecedented capability.” NATO leaders agreed at Riga on common funding of short-notice deployments of the NRF, an agreement that should act as an incentive for countries to participate in future rotations of the force.

The agreement specifically covers airlift, “the most expensive part,” according to the Secretary General. A Boeing C-17 was

displayed at Riga airport during the Summit. Fourteen NATO nations plus Sweden intend to jointly purchase and operate three or four of the C-17s under the NATO Strategic Airlift Capability, which will complement the already operational Strategic Airlift Interim Solution using Russian and Ukrainian *Antonov An-124* airlifters. Another initiative is to coordinate support of the future A400M airlifter.

The NATO Response Force and other forces deployed by the Alliance will be defended in the future by NATO's Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence system. The system engineering and integration contract, worth €75 million, was signed in Riga by NATO and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), leader of the industrial team working on the programme. This keeps NATO theatre missile defence on track for an initial operational capability in 2010.

At Riga, NATO leaders launched a special operations forces transformation initiative to increase joint training and doctrine development, improve equipment, and enhance interoperability. The Allies also directed further work in a number of other areas that are vital to modern operations, including air-to-ground surveillance, logistics and intelligence-sharing. These and a broad range of other activities illustrating NATO's transformation in action were displayed at a Transformation Exhibition during the Summit.

Transformation costs money. The Riga Summit declaration stated Allies' commitment to continuing to provide, individually and collectively, the resources necessary to allow NATO to perform the tasks demanded of it. They therefore called on member nations with declining defence spending to increase this spending in real terms.

> Welcoming new Partners

At Riga, NATO leaders agreed to invite three more countries to join Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The Secretary General said Partnership for Peace membership would help bring these countries “more fully into the Euro-Atlantic family”, while emphasising the continued urgency of full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

NATO leaders gave what the Secretary General called a “clear signal” to Membership Action Plan countries Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* that “the Alliance intends to extend further invitations to those countries who meet NATO’s performance-based standards and are able to contribute to Euro-Atlantic security and stability” at the next NATO Summit in 2008.

Allied leaders directed work in Riga to fully develop the political and practical potential of NATO’s partnership frameworks and its relations with Contact Countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Japan. This will include measures to make consultations more focused, more flexible meeting formats, and making established partnership tools available more widely to newer partners, such as those in the Mediterranean Dialogue process and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, as well as to Contact Countries.

At Riga, Allied leaders launched the NATO Training Cooperation Initiative to help train the militaries of its Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners. This will be done through a phased approach,

first by increasing participation in existing NATO training and education programmes and partnership tools, and by establishing a Middle East faculty at the NATO Defense College in Rome. In a second phase, NATO could support the establishment of a dedicated training facility in the Middle East.

Finally, Riga was also an opportunity for Allied leaders to welcome the launch of an Intensified Dialogue with Georgia on issues related to its membership aspirations. They also reaffirmed the importance of the NATO-Ukraine Distinctive Partnership and welcomed progress made under its Intensified Dialogue. The Allies underlined their determination to further deepen the NATO-Russia partnership and exploit the full potential of the NATO-Russia Council. They also called for more intense and stronger cooperation between NATO and the European Union. The Secretary General mentioned Afghanistan and Kosovo as “two areas where this is very necessary indeed.”

In Latvia, NATO leaders reaffirmed the indispensable link between North America and Europe and underlined their commitment to continuing Alliance transformation. The Summit declaration concluded: “The decisions we have taken together, along with the work we have directed, demonstrate that the Alliance is adapting to the 21st century security environment, through its operations, transformed defence capabilities and deeper engagements with countries in and beyond the Euro-Atlantic Area, as well as continued internal reform. These efforts will strengthen our mission in Afghanistan and the Alliance’s ability to meet further challenges. We will meet next in Spring 2008 in order to assess progress, and give further direction to NATO’s ongoing transformation, including our enlargement process.”

*Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

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