**NATO 101**

**A Guide to the Alliance’s Purpose, Structure, and History**

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# Section 1: Introduction to NATO

## Formation, History, and Primary Functions

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed with the signing of the North Atlantic (or Washington) Treaty in 1949 as a political and military alliance between 12 states. Since then, it has grown to include 31 (soon to be 32) European and North American nations. Initially based in London, NATO’s Headquarters was moved to Paris in 1952 before being transferred to Brussels in 1967.

During the Cold War (1949 to 1991) NATO was dedicated overwhelmingly to the collective defense of its members by promoting a peaceful North Atlantic area and deterring threats from the Soviet Union. In the words of Lord Ismay, the Alliance’s first Secretary General, the purpose of NATO was ‘to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down.’ After the Soviet Union dissolved, in its second phase (1991 to 2014), NATO enlarged significantly, championed democracy in Europe and engaged in crisis management and other operations well beyond its traditional area of interest. NATO’s Strategic Concept of 2022 outline three core tasks: deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. Since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 (and the commencement of NATO’s third phase), the Alliance has emphasized the first of these tasks. NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept states that the Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace. The main challenges facing the Alliance today are (i) threats from the east in the form of renewed Russian bellicosity (as highlighted by the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine) and the ambitions and policies of the People’s Republic of China; (ii) challenges from the south in the form of terrorism and regional instability; and (iii) interconnected threats such as climate change.

## How NATO Works

### *Consensus*

As a political-military alliance, it is very important for NATO to be able to act in solidarity. A fractured alliance would not be able to project the strength necessary for effective deterrence. As such, the Alliance’s decision-making processes are all based on the principle of consensus. If even one Ally objects to an idea or proposal, it cannot be adopted. While this certainly can cause problems, the Alliance has generally been able to come to decisions that are agreeable to all its members. Its actions are more credible as a consequence. In reaching a decision, NATO works on the basis of the silence procedure – a proposal is worked up informally by groups of allies (or at the initiative of the Secretary General) and is then put before all the allies in one of NATO’s committees. Unless an ally objects (i.e. ‘breaks silence’), the proposal is regarded as having been adopted. NATO through this mechanism does not engage in formal votes.   
(See: <https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_49178.htm> )

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### *Strategy*

NATO’s topline strategy document is its Strategic Concept. The most recent version was adopted in 2022 (replacing that of 2010). As already noted, that document sets out three core tasks: deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. The Strategic Concept is, in essence, a political statement. It informs more detailed (often classified) documents on military doctrine and operational matters. A number of these were adopted in 2019-2020:

* The NATO Military Strategy (MC 400/4)
* Concept for the Defense and Deterrence of the North Atlantic Area (abbreviated to DDA)
* The Warfighting Capstone Concept

For discussion, see: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/our-experts-decipher-natos-new-strategic-concept/>

At the Vilnius summit in July 2023, NATO adopted a series of regional defense plans that reflected its evolving strategy. See: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/13/nato-summit-new-defense-plans-russia-deterrence-ukraine/>

### *Financing*

As a group of some 30-plus states of widely varying sizes and economies, NATO’s budget and spending is subject to significant debate (usually referred to as the ‘burden-sharing’ issue). Indirect contributions are the largest financial contributions to NATO. These come, for instance, when an ally volunteers equipment or troops to a military operation or assigns military officers or diplomats to work at NATO Headquarters. These costs are usually shouldered by the individual Ally concerned (sometimes referred to ‘as costs lie where they fall’). Direct contributions, the second form of NATO funding, are made to finance requirements of the Alliance that serve the interests of all members, such as NATO-wide Commands. Here, costs are borne collectively and proportionately, often using the principle of common funding. With common funding, all the allies contribute according to an agreed cost-share formula based on Gross National Income. Common funding arrangements are also used to finance NATO’s principal budgets: the civil budget, the military budget, and the NATO Security Investment Program. Additionally, projects can also be jointly funded, which means that the participating countries can identify the requirements, the priorities and the funding arrangements, but NATO provides political and financial oversight.

(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics_67655.htm> ).

NATO has also laid down targets for national defense spending. At the Wales Summit in September 2014, all allies agreed to ‘move towards’ spending at least two per cent of GDP on defense by 2024 with at least 20 per cent of that sum earmarked for the purchase of ‘major new equipment’ and research and development. At the 2023 summit in Vilnius, NATO leaders reaffirmed the two per cent target

NATO publishes an annual compendium that details allied defense expenditure. See: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm>

### *Leadership*

NATO’s decision-making process is led by the North Atlantic Council (the NAC) which meets at Ambassadorial, Ministerial, and Heads of State and Government levels. Day-to-day discussions however, are led by the Secretary General (historically a European politician or diplomat), the Chairman of the Military Committee (nominated by the allies and selected by the NAC), and NATO’s top military commanders: the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (an American General selected by the U.S. president and approved by the NAC) and the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (nominated by the allies and selected by the NAC). These leaders, along with their deputies, oversee a wide variety of committees, divisions and working groups that operate at NATO’s various commands, headquarters and offices.

## 

## Important Personnel

Secretary General: Jens Stoltenberg (Norway)

Deputy Secretary General: Mircea Geoanӑ (Romania)

Chairman of the Military Committee: Admiral Rob Bauer (Netherlands)

Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR): General Christopher G. Cavoli (USA)

Deputy SACEUR: Admiral Sir Keith Blount (UK)

Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation (SACT): General Philippe Lavigne (France)

Deputy SACT: General Chris Badia (Germany)

(See: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/who\_is\_who.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/who_is_who.htm%20) )

## Members and Joining Year

Belgium - 1949

Canada - 1949

Denmark - 1949

France - 1949

Iceland - 1949

Italy - 1949

Luxembourg - 1949

Netherlands - 1949

Norway - 1949

Portugal - 1949

United Kingdom - 1949

United States - 1949

Greece - 1952

Türkiye - 1952

Germany - 1955

Spain - 1982

Czech Republic - 1999

Hungary - 1999

Poland - 1999

Bulgaria - 2004

Estonia - 2004

Latvia – 2004

Lithuania - 2004

Romania - 2004

Slovakia - 2004

Slovenia - 2004 Albania – 2009

Croatia – 2009

Montenegro – 2017

N. Macedonia – 2020

Finland – 2023

Sweden - (expected 2024)

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# Section 2: NATO Structure and Committees

## Principal Committees

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### North Atlantic Council (NAC)

The NAC is the most important decision-making body within NATO. The only committee created by the Washington Treaty, it oversees and provides final decisions on all issues affecting the Alliance. Nothing involving NATO is out of the NAC’s purview.  
<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49763.htm>

### Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)

The NPG acts as the Alliance’s senior body on nuclear matters. Its discussions cover the safety, security and survivability of nuclear weapons, communications and information systems, deployment issues, nuclear arms control, and proliferation.   
<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50069.htm>

### Military Committee (MC)

The MC is NATO’s senior military authority. It is the primary source of military advice to NATO’s civilian decision-making bodies. Its advice is sought prior to any authorization of military action. It represents an essential link between the political decision-making process and the military structures of NATO.  
<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49633.htm>

## Reporting Committees

The Reporting Committees are specialized agencies who, along with working groups, provide advice to the NAC and NPG on their specific topics. Below is a partial list of these committees.

Deputies’ Committee

Defense Policy and Planning Committee

Political Committee

Committee on Proliferation

C3 Board

Operations Policy Committee

Committee for Standardization

Resource Policy and Planning Board

Air and Missile Defense Committee

Aviation Committee

Civil Emergency Planning Committee

Committee on Public Diplomacy

Council Operations & Exercises Committee

Civilian Intelligence Committee

High Level Task Force on Conventional Arms Control

Partnerships & Cooperative Security Committee

## Dialogue Councils

These councils are the institutions of cooperation, partnership, and dialogue that underpin relations between NATO and other countries.

Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC)

NATO-Russia Council (NRC)

NATO-Ukraine Commission

NATO-Georgia Commission

## International Staff (IS)

The IS provides advice, guidance and administrative support to the national delegations at NATO Headquarters in order to help implement decisions taken at different committee levels. The IS is made up of the following divisions:

Joint Intelligence and Security Emerging Security Challenges

Political Affairs and Security Policy Defense Policy and Planning

Operations Defense Investment

Public Diplomacy Executive Management

(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_58110.htm>)

## NATO Centers of Excellence (COE)

COEs are independent international military organizations that train and educate leaders and specialists from NATO member and partner countries. They assist in doctrine development, identify lessons learned, improve interoperability and capabilities, and test and validate concepts through experimentation. Below is a list of NATO-accredited COEs:

Analysis and Simulation for Air Operations

Civil-Military Cooperation

Cold Weather Operations

Combined Joint Operations from the Sea

Command and Control

Cooperative Cyber Defense

Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices

Counter Intelligence

Crisis Management and Disaster Response

Defense Against Terrorism

Energy Security

Explosive Ordnance Disposal

Human Intelligence

Integrated Air and Missile Defense

Joint Air Power

Joint CBRN Defense

Maritime Geospatial Information, Meteorology and Oceanography

Maritime Security

Military Engineering

Military Medicine

Military Police

Modelling and Simulation

Mountain Warfare

Naval Mine Warfare

Operations in Confined and Shallow Waters

Security Force Assistance

Stability Policing

Strategic Communication

(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_68372.htm>)

## 

## International Military Staff (IMS)

Made up of both civilian and military personnel, the role of the IMS is to provide strategic military advice and staff support to the Military Committee.

Plans and Policy Division

Operations Division

Intelligence Division

Cooperation and Regional Security Division

Logistics, Armaments & Resources Division

NATO Situation Centre

Financial Controller

Partner Country Representation

NATO Military Audiovisual Working Group

NATO Committee on Gender Perspective

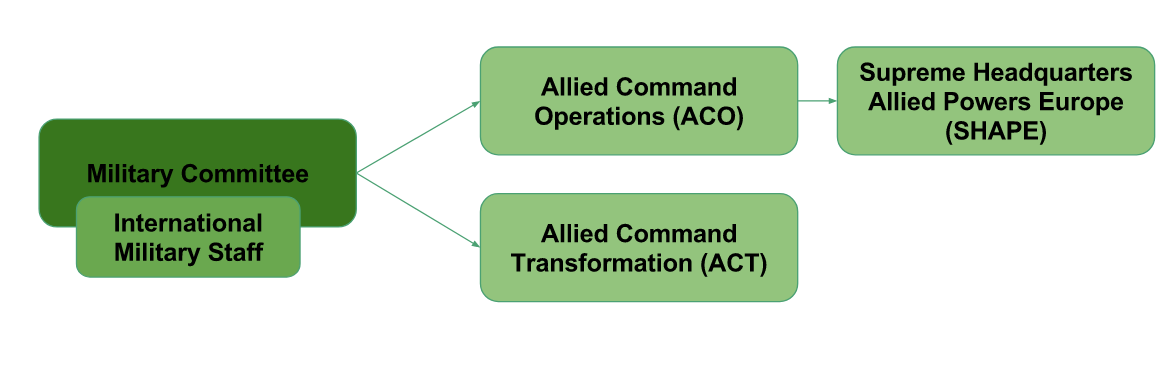
NATO HQ Consultation, Control and Communications Staff (HQC3)

(See also: [https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics\_49174.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics_49174.htm%20) )

## 

## NATO Military and Command Structure

NATO’s top-level military structure is broken down into three main sections: The Military Committee supported by the International Military Staff (both described above); Allied Command Operations in Mons, Belgium; and Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia, United States.



### *Allied Command Operations (ACO)*

ACO is responsible for the planning and execution of all Alliance military operations. It is made up of a small number of permanently established specialized headquarters. The Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), who, despite his title, is responsible for all operations, regardless of location, assumes the command of operations at the strategic level at Strategic Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), NATO’s senior military headquarters (located in Mons, Belgium).

### *Allied Command Transformation (ACT)*

ACT leads many initiatives designed to transform NATO’s military structure, forces, capabilities and doctrine. Its main responsibilities include education, training and exercises, as well as assessing new concepts, and promoting interoperability throughout the Alliance.

Note: NATO’s command structure recently underwent major innovation with the introduction of reforms agreed at the June 2018 summit. This involves a new Joint Force Command for the Atlantic (based in Norfolk, Virginia, USA), a Joint Support and Enabling Command in Germany and a Cyber Operations Center attached to SHAPE. In

See: <https://usefulcharts.com/blogs/charts/nato-command-structure-2022> See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yylsDFuvIJc>

*NATO Command Structure (2022)*

## A diagram of a company Description automatically generated

<https://usefulcharts.com/blogs/charts/nato-command-structure-2022>

## Important Military Units and Resources

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*Command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR)*

Information gathering and surveillance have been large parts of NATO missions throughout its history, it has acquired two major aerial tools for these purposes. The first, the Boeing E-3A Sentry, commonly known as AWACS, is an airborne early warning and control aircraft. It provides all-weather surveillance, command, control, and communications. NATO currently owns 14 of these (they are due to be replaced with the Boeing E-7A Wedgetail from 2031). AWACs have been deployed by NATO as part of the anti-ISIS coalition and have been used to patrol the skies over eastern Europe as part of the NATO deterrence posture. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, NATO’s fleet of AWACS has been protecting Allies by monitoring NATO airspace. Global Hawks, second, are the Alliance’s newest surveillance tool. A group of Allies is acquiring five Global Hawk remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) and the associated ground command and control stations that make up the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system.   
(see: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-future-of-nato-c4isr-assessment-and-recommendations-after-madrid/>)

A third initiative takes NATO into outer space. In February 2023, NATO launched the Alliance Persistent Surveillance from Space (APSS) initiativewith the aim of sharing satellite data from NATO-nation and commercial sources.   
(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_175419.htm> )

### *Joint Force Air Component (JFAC)*

NATO’s JFAC is a specialized, quick response unit equipped for crisis response operations. Depending on the size of the operation, the JFAC may be specially tailored to meet the mission requirements. It can be supplemented from all Air Command entities or augmented from other NATO Air Forces or national JFACs as required for NATO missions.  
(see: <https://ac.nato.int/page8031753>)

### *Forward Presence*

In 2016, as part of its Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), NATO agreed to deploy four multinational battalion battle groups to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The groups are under the command of Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters in Szczecin, Poland. Simultaneously, NATO developed a Tailored Forward Presence (TFP) in the south-eastern part of Alliance territory. A key element of this presence involves land forces training within a multinational framework brigade in Romania, led by Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast (see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics_136388.htm>). Both the EFP and TFP have been reinforced following the Russian invasion of Ukraine (see: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11866> ). The extraordinary meeting of NATO Heads of State and Government in March 2022 agreed to set up a further four multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. (See also p.22 below on the new NATO Force Model agreed at the June 2022 Madrid summit).

### *NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs)*

As part of NATO’s adaptation to security challenges from the east and the south, in 2016 the Alliance established eight Force Integration Units in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. These small headquarters facilitate the rapid deployment of forces to the eastern part of the Alliance, support collective defense planning and assist in coordinating training and exercises. They also work with host nations to identify logistical networks, transportation routes and supporting infrastructure to ensure that NATO’s high-readiness forces can deploy as quickly as possible and work together effectively.  
(see: [https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-force-integration-units](https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-force-integration-units%20) )

### *NATO Response Force (NRF)*

The NRF was established in 2002 as a high readiness force capable of rapid deployment. It is designed to perform a wide variety of tasks including immediate collective defense response, crisis management, peace support operations, disaster relief, and the protection of critical infrastructure. At the 2014 Wales Summit, the Alliance decided to enhance the NRF by restructuring it into seven components numbering 40,000 troops in total. The newest and most significant component is the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF*)* which consist of about 20,000 troops and includes land, air, maritime and special operations components. Leading elements of the VJTF are ready to move within 2-3 days. Another important component of the NRF is the Initial Follow-On Forces Groups (IFFG), which consists of high-readiness forces that can deploy quickly, with leading elements ready to move within 15-30 days. Other elements include a maritime component based on NATO’s Standing Naval Forces (SNFs), combat air and air-support, Special Operations Forces, and a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Task Force. Elements of the NRF were deployed to Afghanistan in the summer of 2021 to assist with the evacuation of Afghans involved in the departing NATO mission in the country. In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO in February 2022 activated defense plans that allow for the deployment of the NRF/VJTF. Shortly after, 500 French troops deployed to Romania and 8,500 American troops were placed on standby for the NRF (7,000 of which were deployed to Germany). In spring of 2022 elements of the NRF participated in exercise Cold Response 2022 in Norway. This exercise brought together 30,000 troops from 27 countries and tested the NRF’s reinforcement ability of Norway and its integration with the armed forces of other Allies and partners. (see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/49755.htm> ).

The new NATO Force Model agreed at the June 2022 Madrid summit (see p.22) is intended to replace the NRF (it will include a newly-constituted Allied Reaction Force).

### *Standing Naval Forces (SNFs)*

NATO’s SNFs provide the Alliance with a continuous naval presence. These forces can be deployed rapidly in times of crisis or tension. The SNFs consist of four groups: Standing NATO Maritime Groups 1 and 2 (SNMG1 and SNMG2) and Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups 1 and 2 (SNMCMG1 and SNMCMG2). The SNMGs are multinational, integrated maritime forces made up of vessels from various allied countries. These vessels are permanently available to NATO to perform different tasks ranging from exercises to operational missions. SNMG1 is the designated maritime component of the NRF and operates in the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic region. SNMG2 deploys to the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and has been used for NATO naval missions off the coast of east Africa/Gulf of Aden. SNMGs have, in recent years, been concerned with monitoring Russian naval forces. The SNMCMGs are multinational forces that primarily engage in search and explosive ordnance disposal operations (see: [https://shape.nato.int/about/aco-capabilities2/nato-standing-naval-forces](https://shape.nato.int/about/aco-capabilities2/nato-standing-naval-forces%20) )

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### *Framework Nation Concept*

### NATO has long worked on the basis of lead or framework nations – a key ally which oversees force generation and command in a particular theatre of operation (such as Kosovo or Afghanistan, for example). Distinct from this, the Alliance at its summit in Wales in September 2014 endorsed the Framework Nations Concept which emphasized ‘groups of Allies coming together to work multi-nationally for the joint development of forces and capabilities.’ Such a ‘framework’ would be led by a key ally. In NATO, three such frameworks have emerged. Germany leads the largest of these involving sixteen NATO allies and partners. The British effort is centred on the Joint Expeditionary Force. The Italian initiative is geared toward training and future operations in the Mediterranean region.

### <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--4672--SE>

### <https://www.csis.org/analysis/indispensable-natos-framework-nations-concept-beyond-madrid>

# Section 3: NATO Partnerships and Potential New Members

## Partnership Programs

### *Partnership for Peace (PfP)*

The Partnership for Peace is a program of bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO. Begun in 1994, PfP covers all areas of NATO’s activities. Some countries choose to deepen their cooperation with NATO by developing Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAPs). Many PfP participants have since become full members of NATO. The PfP program currently has 19 members: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyz Republic, Malta, Moldova, Russia (suspended), Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. On 5 July 2022 at the Madrid Summit, Finland and Sweden were officially invited to join the Alliance after submitting their formal applications in May of the same year. Finland acceded to NATO in April 2023; Swedish accession ran foul of objections in Turkey and Hungary, but it is expected to join NATO in early 2024 (at which point its partner status will lapse).

### *Mediterranean Dialogue (MD)*

The Mediterranean Dialogue, a partnership with states in North Africa and the Levant, was created in 1994. Its overall aim is to contribute to regional security and stability, achieve better mutual understanding, and dispel misconceptions about NATO among Dialogue countries. It is based upon the twin pillars of political dialogue and practical cooperation. The MD currently has seven members: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_52927.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52927.htm%20) )

### *Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI)*

The ICI, launched in June of 2004, aims to contribute to long-term global and regional security by offering countries of the Arab Gulf region practical bilateral security cooperation with NATO. ICI focuses on practical cooperation in areas where NATO can add value, notably in the security field. Notably, the ICI lacks the pro-democratization elements that characterize the Alliance’s other partnerships. The ICI currently has four members: Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia and Oman have also shown an interest in the Initiative but have not joined for various reasons.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics\_52956.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_52956.htm%20) )

### *Partners across the Globe*

In addition to its formal partnership programs, NATO cooperates with a range of countries on an individually-tailored basis. Some of these countries contribute actively to NATO operations either militarily or in some other way. Nine countries that currently have this relationship: Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, and Pakistan. In June 2021 at the Brussels Summit, Allies agreed that the inclusion of key actors from beyond the Euro-Atlantic area in the future would strengthen NATO engagement. The leaders of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea attended their first ever NATO summit in June 2022 (in Madrid). A year later, they attended the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

*Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII)*At the 2014 Wales summit, NATO launched the PII – a program designed to ‘maintain and deepen the interoperability that has been developed with partners during NATO-led operations and missions over the last decades.’ The PII is made up of two components: the Interoperability Platform, which involves 23 partners, and the Enhanced Opportunities element which offers to six countries - Australia, Georgia, Jordan, Sweden, and Ukraine - ‘tailor made […] deeper cooperation.’ (Sweden will move out of this initiative once it formally joins NATO).

(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132726.htm?selectedLocale=en>)

*Relations with the European Union*

NATO-EU relations are covered by a variety of agreements dating from 2001. The 2016, 2018 and 2023 Joint Declarations have given rise to a programme of cooperation that embraces military mobility, cyber defense, counter-hybrid warfare, and counterterrorism. The cooperation between organizations during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis has been unparalleled, with both presidents of the European Council and European Commission participating in the 2022 Madrid Summit. NATO and the EU currently have 22 member countries in common (23 once Sweden formally accedes to the Alliance). Turkey, Norway, Iceland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada are NATO members but not in the EU. This can pose problems of coordination between the two organizations – <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-european-union-burden-sharing>

(see also: <https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_49217.htm>)

## Potential New Members

### *Georgia*

Despite significant Russian opposition, Georgia has sought closer ties to NATO, and eventual membership. Georgia was the first of NATO’s partners to forge an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). In 2014 it was given the status of an Enhanced Opportunities Partner. Membership of NATO, however, has proven elusive. A non-binding referendum in January 2008 resulted in 72.5 percent of voters supporting NATO accession. NATO’s Bucharest summit in April that year could not agree on a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia but did clearly state that the country would one day join the Alliance. This, in turn, provoked Russian hostility and was a major factor in the Russo-Georgia war of August. Russian forces have occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia ever since. In June 2014, diplomats from NATO suggested that while a MAP was unlikely, a package of ‘reinforced cooperation’ was a possible compromise, to include military capabilities and armed forces training. Further measures were agreed at the 2016 and 2018 NATO summits. NATO Foreign Ministers in November 2020 agreed on a ‘Substantial NATO-Georgia Package.’ As Georgia is one of NATOs partners that is most greatly affected by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, Allies endorsed tailored support measures at the 2022 Madrid Summit.

(See: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_38988.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm%20) )

### *Ukraine*

Ukraine joined NATO's Partnership for Peace initiative in 1994. In 1997, Ukraine and NATO signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership. Then, in April 2005, Ukraine entered into an Intensified Dialogue program with the alliance. In March 2008, Ukraine sent an official letter of application for a MAP (see also Georgia above). NATO at its summit in Bucharest the following month denied Ukraine access to MAP but stated that, along with Georgia, Ukraine would one day join the Alliance. In June 2010 the Ukrainian parliament voted to exclude the goal of ‘integration into Euro-Atlantic security and NATO membership’ from the country's National Security Strategy in a bill drafted by newly elected President Yanukovych. In February 2014, Yanukovych was removed from office by the Ukrainian Parliament. At the same time, pro-Russian unrest occurred in eastern Ukraine and Crimea was annexed by the Russian Federation a month later. Following this, Prime Minister Yatsenyuk announced his intention to resume the bid for NATO integration. The Ukrainian parliament in June 2017 voted in favor of NATO membership as a strategic objective of Ukraine and in 2019 the constitution was amended to include that ambition. The 2020 Ukrainian National Security Strategy repeats that position. NATO, in parallel, strengthened its links. In June 2020, Ukraine was recognized as an Enhanced Opportunities Partner of the Alliance.

Russia has rejected Ukraine’s strategic direction, and used the prospect of NATO membership as a pretext for its invasion of the country in February 2022. Individual NATO allies have provided considerable military assistance to Ukraine during this conflict, but have ruled out direct intervention (including the establishment of a no-fly-zone or military support for humanitarian corridors) (see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm> and <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9477/> ). In September 2022, Ukraine made a formal request to join NATO. The allies are divided on moving forward with this request. The Vilnius summit the following July, offered only ‘to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when Allies agree and conditions are met.’

### *Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Partnership for Peace in 2006, and signed an agreement on security cooperation in March 2007 and an IPAP in January 2008. The country started the process of Intensified Dialogue at the 2008 Bucharest summit. In September 2008, Bosnia-Herzegovina was invited to join the Adriatic Charter of NATO aspirants. In 2009 it lodged an official application for a, which was agreed to, with conditions, in April of 2010. Bosnia- Herzegovina will need to complete a series of political and military reforms before being given the chance to join the Alliance, as well as to address resistance from the Republika Srpska.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics\_52122.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_52122.htm%20) )

### *Others*

Various other European states have relationships to the Alliance that vary in nature and intensity. Cyprus is not involved with NATO in any formal way due to Türkiye’s opposition to that relationship. Serbia’s attitude to the Alliance soured during the 1990s owing to NATO interventions in the Balkans. Serbia also maintains close ties to Russia and China and has adopted a policy of military neutrality. Armenia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan are all members of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which is positioned against NATO. Azerbaijan has committed to a policy of neutrality, but has not ruled out eventually joining NATO or the CSTO. Finally, Mexican membership of NATO has been proposed in order to promote a ‘North American pillar’ of regional security. Israel and Morocco have occasionally been touted as potential NATO members. Countries outside of Europe are currently precluded from NATO membership under the terms of Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

# Section 4: NATO Initiatives, Activities, and Operations

## Current Initiatives and Programs

### *Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD)*

NATO has two principal BMD programs: Theatre Ballistic Missile Defense (TMBD) and BMD for the protection of NATO European territory, populations and forces (NATO BMD). The aim of TBMD is to protect deployed NATO forces against short- and medium-range ballistic missile threats. It has undergone several updates since 2010, and is being integrated into NATO BMD. NATO BMD, sometimes called Territorial BMD, has been in development since the 2010 Lisbon Summit and was declared initially operational in 2016. Türkiye is hosting a US BMD radar at Kürecik; Romania is hosting an Aegis Ashore site at Deveselu Air Base; Germany hosts the command center at Ramstein Air Base; and Poland will host another Aegis Ashore site at the Redzikowo military base. Additionally, Spain is hosting four multi-mission BMD-capable Aegis ships at its naval base in Rota. Several allies currently offer further ground-based air and missile defense systems or complementary ships as a force protection of other BMD assets. Other allies are also developing or acquiring BMD-capable assets.  
(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics\_49635.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_49635.htm%20) )

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### *Cyber Defense Initiatives*

Cyber warfare is one of the newest threats to the NATO’s security. To keep pace with the rapidly changing threat landscape and maintain a robust cyber defense, NATO adopted an enhanced policy and action plan in 2014. That policy establishes that cyber defense is part of the Alliance’s core task of collective defense, confirms that international law applies in cyberspace and intensifies NATO’s cooperation with industry. The top priority is the protection of the communications systems owned and operated by the Alliance. The NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) protects NATO’s own networks by providing centralized and round-the-clock cyber defense support to various NATO sites. NATO has also implemented multiple projects aimed at helping allies work together to strengthen cyber defense capabilities beyond what they could do alone. Additionally, NATO conducts regular exercises and aims to integrate cyber defense elements and considerations into the entire range of Alliance exercises, including the annual Crisis Management Exercise (CMX). NATO is also enhancing its capabilities for cyber education. Through the NATO Industry Cyber Partnership (NICP), NATO and its allies are working to reinforce their relationships with private industry. That partnership relies on existing structures and includes NATO entities, national Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) and NATO member countries’ industry representatives. Reflecting the priority accorded to cyber defense, NATO in August 2018 established a new Cyber Operations Center (COC) embedded within SHAPE. At the Brussels Summit in 2021, Allies endorsed a new Comprehensive Cyber Defense Policy in order to enhance the Alliance’s resilience. At the Vilnius summit in 2023, the allies reiterated the Cyber Defence Pledge (initiated in 2016) and agreed to establish a Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability (VCISC).

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/75747.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/75747.htm%20) )

### *Defense Planning and Capabilities* NATO has, over the years, pursued a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing allied capabilities – these include the Defense Capabilities Initiative, the Connected Forces Initiative and Smart Defense. NATO currently has a particular focus on harnessing ‘disruptive’ technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing, and in pursuing collaborative projects on state-of –the art capabilities (drones, precision-guided weapons, electronic jamming). In October 2021, NATO launched an Innovation Fund and initiated a Defense Innovation Accelerator (DIANA) in 2023 [ <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_216199.htm> ]. These projects sit alongside the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP), which agrees on NATO force requirements and seeks to coordinate defense procurement (through target setting) among the allies. There is a new sense of urgency since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and consequently, ‘Allies have agreed to accelerate investments in defense and to reset NATO’s deterrence and defense in the longer term.’ <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm#>

### *Defense and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative*

The DCB Initiative reinforces NATO’s commitment to partners and helps project stability by providing support to nations requesting defense capacity assistance. It can include various types of support, ranging from strategic advice on defense and security sector reform and institution building, to development of local forces through education and training, or advice and assistance in specialized areas such as logistics or cyber defense. DCB packages have been launched for Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, the Republic of Moldova and Tunisia, and NATO stands ready to provide advisory support to Libya when conditions permit.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_132756.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132756.htm%20) )

*Disaster Response*

NATO has been involved in disaster response and civil emergency planning since as early as 1953 (when it aided the UK following floods in the east of England). This mission has grown in importance since the 1990s and NATO has helped both allies and partners including Albania, Georgia, Moldova, Pakistan, Portugal, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United States. NATO has assisted in relief efforts by airlifting supplies and deploying engineers, medical units and specialist equipment. The Alliance has responded to floods, earthquakes, forest fires, and the COVID-19 pandemic. NATO is assisted in these tasks by a Civil Emergency Planning Committee and the EADRCC. (see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_117757.htm>)

### *Energy Security Initiatives*

While NATO is not an energy institution, energy developments, such as supply disruptions, affect the international security environment and can have far-reaching security implications for some allies. Emerging security challenges, like cyber and hybrid threats on infrastructure, as well as the energy crisis caused by Russia’s attack on Ukraine have become increasingly more important. Though protecting energy infrastructure is primarily a national responsibility, NATO contributes in areas where it can add value, notably the exchange of best practices with partner countries, many of which are important energy producers or transit countries, and with other international institutions and the private sector. Additionally, NATO has taken steps to increase energy efficiency in the military by adopting a Green Defense framework in 2014 and created a group of experts, the Smart Energy Team (SENT), that works closely with other NATO stakeholders, such as military engineers and fuel experts. NATO has overseen a European Pipeline System since 1959. (see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics\_49208.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_49208.htm%20) )

### *Nuclear Weapons*

Three of NATO’s members are nuclear weapons’ states – France, the UK and the US. France, however, has opted out of NATO nuclear sharing arrangements and does not participate in the Nuclear Planning Group. Further, it does not formally assign its nuclear weapons to NATO. The nuclear strategies of the UK and the US, by contrast, allow for extended nuclear deterrence (i.e. the use of national nuclear weapons for the defense of allies). The US is also the basis of NATO nuclear sharing arrangements. At present, US-controlled nuclear weapons are located in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Türkiye. These are designed to be delivered by ‘dual-capable aircraft’ of the host nation. NATO’s agreed position on nuclear weapons is set out authoritatively in the 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review. This states that ‘[a]s long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.’ NATO does not itself have legal personality and so does not sign treaties. It does, however, support American efforts at nuclear arms control (most obviously in relation to the US-Russian START Treaty) and has backed an American decision (in August 2019) to withdraw from the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty over allegations of Russian non-compliance. The agreed NATO position is to support the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In December 2020, NATO issued a statement agreed by consensus among its members, critical of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (otherwise known as the Nuclear Ban Treaty). The Ban Treaty has been signed by 84 states and entered into force in late January 2021. The NATO position is that the treaty ‘lacks any rigorous or clear mechanisms for verification, and has not been signed by any state that possesses nuclear weapons, and thus will not result in the elimination of a single nuclear weapon.’ NATO’s current nuclear policy is based on the 2022 Strategic Concept, the 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review, and the 2020 DDA (see p.3) For a summary of NATO nuclear policy, see: <https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/2/pdf/200224-factsheet-nuclear-en.pdf>

<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm>

*Resilience*

NATO’s response to natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on national resilience (a concept that also embraces how well a country can cope with internal political disruption and the integrity of its communication and transportation systems). Civil preparedness is an important element of the ‘resilience challenge.’ At the 2016 Warsaw summit NATO adopted seven ‘baseline requirements for national resilience.’ One of these baseline requirements – on civil communications systems – was updated by the allies in October 2019 in response to the emergence of 5G technology. The June 2021 NATO summit issued a Strengthened Resilience Commitment and furthermore, under the ‘NATO 2030’ process, Heads of State and Government have agreed to enhance resilience consistent with Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The 2022 Strategic Concept states that ‘ensuring our national and collective resilience is critical to all our core tasks.’

see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_185340.htm>

### *Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme*

The SPS Program promotes dialogue and practical cooperation between NATO countries and partner nations based on scientific research, technological innovation and knowledge exchange. The SPS Program offers funding, expert advice and support to tailor-made, security-relevant activities that respond to NATO’s strategic objectives. It connects scientists, experts, and officials from allied and partner countries to address security challenges of every variety, from traditional concerns to cyber warfare, to the environment.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/78209.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/78209.htm%20) )

### *Terrorism-Related Initiatives*

NATO’s Strategic Concept ‘recognizes terrorism, in all its forms […] as the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of NATO citizens and to international peace and prosperity.’ Operation Active Endeavour and the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan were both launched after 9/11 (see below). NATO’s most recent mission in Afghanistan was Resolute Support, a training mission that was terminated in early September 2021. NATO also undertakes the Defense against Terrorism Program of Work (DAT POW). The aim of DAT POW is to prevent non-conventional attacks, such as suicide attacks with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and mitigate other challenges, such as attacks on critical infrastructure. The DAT POW projects are consolidated under three capability umbrellas: incident management, force protection and survivability, and network engagement. In September 2017, NATO initiated the ‘NATO Strategic Direction South Hub’ based at NATO’s Joint Force Command in Naples, Italy. Around 100 people are expected to work for the Hub, collecting and analyzing information, assessing potential threats and engaging with partner nations and organizations. Counter-terrorism is also an important element of NATO’s cooperative activities with the EU. Further, NATO has taken part in the international Coalition to Defeat ISIS, has launched a training mission in Iraq and since 2017 has had a terrorism intelligence cell located at NATO HQ.

NATO is a member of the International Coalition to Defeat ISIS and contributes to that mission through the provision of AWACS aircraft.

(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm> )

### *Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Related Initiatives*

NATO has taken many steps to prevent WMD proliferation, deter potential attacks, and be prepared for recovery operations should one occur. The Alliance stepped up its activities in this area in 1999 with the launch of the WMD Initiative. This was designed to integrate political and military aspects of NATO’s work in responding to the proliferation of WMD. The WMD Non-Proliferation Centre was launched in May 2000 as a result. NATO continues to significantly improve its CBRN defense posture with the establishment of the Combined Joint CBRN Defense Task Force (CJ-CBRND-TF) and multiple COEs related to this issue. Additionally, NATO creates and improves standardization documents, conducts training and exercises, and develops capability improvements in the field of CBRN defense through a variety of methods. Finally, under the auspices of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), NATO allies have established an inventory of national civil and military capabilities that could be made available to assist stricken countries following a CBRN terrorist attack.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics\_50325.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_50325.htm%20) )

### *Climate Change* At its summit meeting in June 2021, NATO noted that climate change is a ‘threat multiplier that impacts Alliance security.’ The leaders of the Alliance agreed that NATO would aim to ‘become the leading international organisation when it comes to understanding and adapting to the impact of climate change on security.’ They also set 2050 as the target date by which allied militaries would be responsible for net zero emissions. In June 2022, NATO released its first Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment and called for a transformational approach to defense and security, setting NATO as a leader in recognizing and adapting to climate change. The new 2022 Strategic Concept recognized climate change as a ‘major security challenge for NATO in the decade to come.’ (see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_185174.htm> and <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_197241.htm>)

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## Current Missions and Operations

### *NATO in Kosovo - June 1999 to present*

As of March 2022, some 3,770 allied and partner troops operated in Kosovo as part of NATO’s Kosovo Force (KFOR). NATO troops first entered Kosovo in June 1999 following the conclusion of Operation Allied Force (see below) in order to uphold peace and support a UN-mandated administration (UNMIK). Following Kosovo’s declaration of independence in February 2008, NATO agreed it would continue to maintain its presence. It has since helped to create a professional and multi-ethnic Kosovo Security Force.

(Operation Allied Force: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49602.htm>

See also: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm>)

### *Sea Guardian – November 2016 to present*

Sea Guardian is the successor to Operation Active Endeavour (see below) launched in the wake of 9/11. This Mediterranean maritime mission currently performs three tasks: maritime situational awareness, counter-terrorism at sea and support to capacity-building.  
(see: [https://mc.nato.int/missions/operation-sea-guardian.aspx](https://mc.nato.int/missions/operation-sea-guardian.aspx%20) )

### *Supporting the African Union - June 2007 to present*

Since June 2007, NATO has assisted the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM*)* by providing airlift support for AU peacekeepers. NATO is also providing capacity-building support, as well as expert training support to the African Standby Force (ASF), at the AU’s request. The ASF is intended to be deployed in Africa in times of crisis and is part of the AU’s efforts to develop long-term peacekeeping capabilities.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_8191.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8191.htm%20) )

### *Air policing - 2014 to present*

Air policing missions are collective peacetime operations that enable NATO to detect, track and identify all violations and infringements of its airspace and to take appropriate action. NATO has deployed air policing missions over Albania, Iceland, the Benelux countries and Slovenia, as well as the Baltic region where NATO F-16s have intercepted Russian aircraft repeatedly violating allied airspace.

(see: [https://ac.nato.int/page5931922/-nato-air-policing](https://ac.nato.int/page5931922/-nato-air-policing%20)

<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132685.htm> )

### *Assistance for the Refugee/Migrant Crisis in the Aegean Sea - February 2016 to present*

Following a request from Germany, Greece and Türkiye, NATO defense ministers decided in February 2016 to assist with the growing refugee and migrant crisis in Europe. Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) is conducting reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance of illegal crossings in the territorial waters of Greece and Türkiye, as well as in international waters. It is sharing whatever relevant information it finds with the Greek and Turkish coast guards and authorities. NATO is also sharing this information in real-time with Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, so that it can take even more effective action.  
(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics\_70759.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ra/natohq/topics_70759.htm%20) )

*NATO Training Mission Iraq*Launched in Baghdad in October 2018, this is a 500-strong non-combat mission aimed at strengthening the Iraqi armed forces so preventing the re-emergence of ISIS as a powerful force in the country. NATO defense ministers agreed in February 2021 to expand the NATO Mission Iraq as requested by the Iraqi government.  
(see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_166936.htm> )

*Deterrence and Defense in the Eastern Flank (and NATO-Russia relations)*

This is a combined effort that embraces a number of elements detailed above – including air-policing, the NRF/VJTF, forward presence and the deployment of multinational brigades (including the EFP and the TFP), and AWAC patrols. These measures were given impetus by the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, following which NATO agreed to the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) backed by the US European Deterrence Initiative and Operation Atlantic Resolve. In June 2018, NATO reinforced the RAP by launching the NATO Readiness Initiative. This involved the allies agreeing to have by 2020 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval combat vessels ready to deploy within 30 days’ notice (the so-called ‘four thirties’). Further measures of reinforcement (notably the deployment of the NRF/VJTF and the establishment of four new multinational battle groups) were agreed by the allies following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_119353.htm> ). The 2022 Strategic Concept and the Madrid and Vilnius Summit Declarations of June 2022 and July 2023 outlined further measures to strengthen NATO’s eastern flank (see map on next page) – including the establishment of a new ‘Force Model’: <https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/220629-infographic-new-nato-force-model.pdf>

Deterrence and defense reflect the marked deterioration of relations with Russia. During the 1990s, relations were relatively cooperative, symbolised in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act and Russian participation in both IFOR/SFOR and KFOR. Grievances on both sides built up steadily, however. The NATO side was concerned at Russia’s use of force to subdue Chechnya and its short war with Georgia in 2008. Russia, meanwhile, opposed OAF and NATO enlargement. A significant downturn occurred with the Russian annexation of Crimea. The NATO-Russia Council was suspended and NATO undertook a significant reorientation toward collective defense and deterrence. In late 2021, Russia issued a draft European security treaty that demanded a halt to enlargement and the demilitarization of states who had joined the Alliance since 1997. This was followed shortly after by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.



<https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/3/pdf/2203-map-det-def-east.pdf>

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## Past Missions

### *Resolute Support Mission (RSM), Afghanistan - January 2015 to August 2021*

The follow-up to ISAF, NATO’s current mission in Afghanistan is a non-combat mission which provides training, advice and assistance to Afghan security forces and institutions. Initially at a strength of some 17,000 personnel from both NATO and partner countries, the force has been wound down since 2016. A 2020 agreement between the US and the Taliban foresaw the removal of all foreign forces by May 2021. In April 2021, allied Foreign and Defense Ministers agreed terminate the NATO mission in the country. All remaining NATO forces withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021. NATO has since launched a lessons-learned exercise on the experience of Afghanistan: <https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/12/pdf/2112-factsheet-afgh-lessons-en.pdf>

### *Counter-piracy around the Horn of Africa - October 2008 to December 2016*

In cooperation with the United Nations, NATO has participated in a variety of counter-piracy operations in the past 10 years. NATO-led Operation Allied Provider was conducted from October to December 2008 and involved counter-piracy activities off the coast of Somalia. From March to August 2009, NATO ran Operation Allied Protector, a counter-piracy operation off the Horn of Africa designed to build on Allied Provider. The subsequent Operation Ocean Shield was a longer operation with a similar focus. It ended in 2016, having achieved its objectives.

### *Operation Active Endeavour - October 2001 to October 2016*

Initiated in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to deter, defend, disrupt and protect against terrorist activity in the Mediterranean, Operation Active Endeavour began as an Article 5 operation. It developed into a full-scale effort to deter terrorism and secure one of the globe’s largest trade routes. It was succeeded by Operation Sea Guardian in October 2016.

### *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - August 2003 to December 2014*

Established at the request of the Afghan authorities and under a UN mandate granted in 2001, ISAF’s mission was to develop new Afghan security forces and enable Afghan authorities to provide effective security across the country. In January 2015, NATO launched Resolute Support (see above), a non-combat mission, to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces and institutions.

(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_69366.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm%20) )

### *NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) - July 2004 to December 2011*

NTM-I was established to assist in the development of Iraqi security forces training structures. It was withdrawn from Iraq at the end of 2011 when the mandate of the mission expired and agreement could not be reached on the legal status of NATO troops operating in the country. A new mission was launched in 2018 (see above).

### *Operation Unified Protector - March to October 2011*

This mission, authorized by the UN after the beginning of the Libyan civil war, had three distinct components: the enforcement of an arms embargo on the Mediterranean to prevent the transfer of arms, related material, and mercenaries to Libya; the enforcement of a no-fly-zone in order to prevent bombing civilian targets; and air and naval strikes against military forces involved in attacks or threats to attack Libyan civilians. The operation was terminated on 31 October 2011.   
(see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics\_71652.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/topics_71652.htm%20) )

### *Assisting the African Union in Darfur, Sudan - June 2005 to December 2007*

NATO provided air transport for the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), as well as trained and mentored over 250 AMIS officials. NATO’s support to this mission ended when AMIS was succeeded by the UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), but the Alliance immediately expressed its readiness to consider any request for support to the new peacekeeping mission.

### *Riga Summit Security - November 2006*

NATO responded to a request made by the Latvian government for assistance in assuring the security of the Riga Summit in November 2006. NATO provided technical security, CBRN response capabilities, air and sea policing, improvised explosive device (IED) detections, communications and information systems, and medical evacuation support.

### *Support to the US in the wake of Hurricane Katrina – September to October 2005* NATO’s Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center oversaw twelve transatlantic flights bringing nearly 190 tons of relief goods to the stricken area.

### *Operation Distinguished Games - June to September 2004*

In response to a request by the Greek government, NATO provided assistance to the Olympic and Paralympic Games held in Athens. NATO provided intelligence support, provision of chemical, biological radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defense assets and AWACS radar aircraft. This was the first operation in which non-Article 4 or 5 NATO assistance was provided within the borders of a member country.

### *NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina - July 1992 to December 2004*

NATO’s mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina started with the enforcement of an arms embargo and a no-fly-zone declared by the UN in 1992. Operation Deadeye began in the summer of 1995 with a bombing campaign against Bosnian Serb air forces, but failed to result in Bosnian Serb compliance with the UN’s demands to withdraw. Operation Deliberate Force targeted Bosnian Serb command and control installations and ammunition facilities. With the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord in December 1995, NATO immediately deployed a UN-mandated Implementation Force (IFOR) as part of Operation Joint Endeavour. This was followed in December 1996 by the deployment a Stabilisation Force (SFOR). NATO brought its peace-support operation to a conclusion in December 2004 and the European Union deployed a new force called Operation Althea. The Alliance has maintained a military headquarters in the country to carry out a number of specific tasks related, in particular, to assisting the government in reforming its defense structures (see: [https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics\_52122.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_52122.htm%20) ).

### *Operation Display Deterrence - February to April 2003*

NATO deployed AWACS radar aircraft and air defense batteries to enhance the defense of Türkiye during the second Gulf War.

### *NATO in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - August 2001 to March 2003*

NATO played a significant role in support of FYROMduring the insurgency of the Albanian National Liberation Army. Operation Essential Harvest disarmed ethnic Albanian groups operating throughout the country. Operation Amber Fox provided protection for international monitors overseeing the implementation of the peace plan. Operation Allied Harmony began in December 2002 to provide advisory elements to assist the government in ensuring stability throughout FYROM. NATO remains committed to helping FYROM integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures. To that end, NATO Headquarters Skopje was created in April 2002 to advise on military aspects of security sector reform; it still operates today.

### *Operation Eagle Assist - October 2001 to May 2002*

The Alliance’s first-ever counter-terrorism operation came as a direct result of the attacks on 9/11 in the United States. Operation Eagle Assist utilized seven NATO AWACS radar aircraft to patrol the skies over the United States. This was the first time that NATO military assets were deployed in support of an Article 5 operation.

*Operation Allied Force – March - June 1999*Following the failure of peace talks aimed at ending Serb attacks on the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo (a province of Serbia), NATO launched Operation Allied Force (OAF). This campaign on targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) involved aerial sorties and sea-launched missile strikes. NATO action was geared toward a withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo so as to pave the way for a return of refugees and a political settlement. After a 78-day campaign, the Yugoslav leadership agreed to a peace deal brokered by Finnish and Russian mediators. That agreement was, in turn, the basis for UNSCR 1244 and a military-technical agreement (the Kumanovo agreement) between NATO and Yugoslavia/Serbia. These documents paved the way for the deployment of KFOR and the establishment of UNMIK (see p.19 above).

*Operation Allied Harbour – April – September 1999*

While OAF was underway, the Alliance deployed a NATO Albania Force (AFOR) to deal with the humanitarian crisis caused by refugees fleeing Kosovo into Albania and Macedonia. AFOR facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid into Albania and the construction of refugee camps. With the winding down of the operation, elements of AFOR transitioned to KFOR. Operation Allied Harbour was NATO’s first ever humanitarian mission.   
<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/sustain_hope.htm>

### *Operation Agile Genie - May 1992*

During a period of growing Western tension with Libya after the UN Security Council imposed sanctions designed to induce Libya to surrender suspects in the bombing of a Pan Am airliner over the town of Lockerbie in Scotland in 1988, NATO provided increased AWACS coverage of the Central Mediterranean to monitor air approach routes from the North African littoral.

### *Operation Allied Goodwill I & II - February to March 1992*

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the collapse of its centrally-controlled economic system, NATO assisted an international relief effort by flying teams of humanitarian assistance experts and medical advisors to Russia and other Commonwealth of Independent States nations using AWACS trainer cargo aircraft.

### *Operation Ace Guard - January 1991 to March 1991*

In response to a request for assistance to meet the threat posed by Iraq during the first Gulf Crisis/War, NATO deployed the ACE Mobile Force (Air) and air defense packages to Türkiye.

### *Operation Anchor Guard - August 1990 to March 1991*

After Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, NATO Airborne Early Warning aircraft deployed to Konya, Türkiye, to monitor the crisis and provide coverage of southeastern Türkiye in case of an Iraqi attack during the first Gulf Crisis/War.

**Exercises and Training**

NATO engages in a constant program of exercises and training designed to test operational readiness and to maintain inter-operability among both allies and NATO partners. Exercises take three forms: live exercises, command post exercises and an exercise study. As well as NATO exercises (defined as being initiated or co-initiated by the Alliance) individual nations will organize multi-national exercises (‘allied national exercises’), which reinforce NATO objectives. Since the down-turn in relations with Russia after the Crimea crisis, NATO and national exercises have obtained a clearer focus on Article V (collective defense) contingencies. There has also been much discussion about the need to close ‘the exercise gap’ – the disparity in scale between Russian and NATO exercises. See: [https://shape.nato.int/exercises](https://shape.nato.int/exercises%20)

In October 2018, NATO launched exercise Trident Juncture, the biggest NATO exercise since 2002. Hosted by Norway, the exercise entailed both live and command post elements, involving approximately 40,000 personnel, 250 aircraft, 65 maritime vessels and 10,000 land vehicles drawn from thirty NATO allies and partners, The exercise was designed to test the deployment of NATO’s Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and centred on major land, amphibious and maritime combat scenarios in and around Norway (with the maritime component also embracing Poland, Denmark, Germany and NATO partner Sweden).

See: [https://www.cfr.org/article/natos-trident-juncture-exercises-what-know](%20https:/www.cfr.org/article/natos-trident-juncture-exercises-what-know)

[https://forsvaret.no/exercise](https://forsvaret.no/exercise%20)

NATO Defender 2020 would have been one of NATO’s largest post-Cold War exercises involving the dispatch of 20,000 US personnel to Europe. It was scaled back significantly owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Exercises resumed at scale in 2021 (including Steadfast Defender 2021). In 2022, NATO undertook Exercises Cold Response (involving 30,000 troops from 27 allies and partners, hosted by Norway); Brilliant Jump (a test of the NRF also hosted by Norway) and Neptune Strike (in the Atlantic). For exercises in 2023 and an overview of their purpose, see: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49285.htm>

**Section 5: NATO Acronyms and Abbreviations**

A2/AD - Anti Access/Area Denial

ACO - Allied Command Operations

ACT - Allied Command Transformation

AJF - Allied Joint Force

AWACS - Airborne Warning And Control System

C2 - Command and Control

C3 - Consultation, Command, and Control

CBRN - Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear

CFE - Conventional Forces in Europe (Treaty)

CFI - Connected Forces Initiative

CHOD - Chief of Defense

COE - Centre of Excellence

DAT POW - Defense Against Terrorism Program Of Work

DCA - Dual-Capable Aircraft

DCBI - Defense and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative

DDA – (Concept for the) for the Defense and Deterrence of the North Atlantic Area

DDPR - Deterrence and Defense Posture Review

DEEP - Defense Education Enhancement Program

DIP - Defense Investment Pledge

DDP - Defense Planning Process

DSACEUR – Deputy Allied Commander Europe

EAPC - Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council

EDI - European Deterrence Initiative

EDU - European Defense Union

EFP - Enhance Forward Presence

ESDI - European Security and Defense Identity

ETEE - Education, Training, Exercises, and Evaluation

EU CSDP - European Union Command Security and Defense Policy

FIU - Force Integration Units

ICI - Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

IPAP - Individual Partnership Action Plan

ISAF - International Security Assistance Force

JFC - Joint Forces Command

JISR - Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

MAP - Membership Action Plan

MD - Mediterranean Dialogue

MJO - Major Joint Operation

NRF - NATO Response Force

NSD-E - NATO Strategic Direction East

NSD-S - NATO Strategic Direction South

NTM - Notice to Move

OODA - Observe, Orient, Decide, Act

PfP - Partnership for Peace

RAP- Readiness Action Plan

SHAPE - Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

SACEUR - Supreme Allied Commander Europe

SD - Smart Defense

SSR - Security Sector Reform

TFP - Tailored Forward Presence

VJTF - Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (‘Spearhead’)

(see also the list of NATO acronyms at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/doing-business-with-foreign-defence-markets/annex-c-nato-acronyms.html>)

## Section 6: Further Reading

For authoritative information on NATO’s purpose, structure, history, and current operations, the most comprehensive and authoritative source is the Secretary General’s [Annual Report](https://www.nato.int/SGReport/).

[NATO’s web site](http://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html) also provides a detailed overview of the organization and functions of the Alliance. It is also a useful exercise to familiarize yourself with [NATO’s founding treaty](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm) (from 1949), the [2022 NATO Strategic Concept](https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/index.html) and recent official documents (those adopted at [Wales](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm) in 2014, [Warsaw](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm) in 2016 and [Brussels](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm) in 2018, as well as the 2019 [London Declaration](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm) and the June 2021 [Brussels Summit Communiqué](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm), the 2022 [Madrid Summit Declaration](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_196951.htm), and the 2023 [Vilnius summit communiqué](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm).

In November 2020, the NATO Reflection Group released *NATO 2030* a report that outlined the security and political environment facing the Alliance and made a series of recommendations on how NATO could tackle ‘emerging threats and challenges from every direction.’ Worth reading in full [here](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf). This document marked the beginning of work on the new 2022 Strategic Concept

See: <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>

Other useful sites include:

* [The Atlantic Council](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/)
* [The NATO Parliamentary Assembly](http://www.nato-pa.int/content/home)
* [NATO Watch](http://natowatch.org/)

Useful background on the principles which inform NATO’s purpose and the methods by which it conducts its business can be found at: <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49178.htm>

[A speech given by NATO’s first Secretary General](http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1957/s19570604.htm), Lord Hastings Ismay, as long ago as 1957 still provides useful insights on how NATO allies should carry out their business.

The best source for national military capabilities is *The Military Balance* published by the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London. You should check if your library takes a subscription. If not, a useful online alternative is [Global Firepower](http://www.globalfirepower.com/). You should also familiarize yourself with [NATO’s official military expenditure data.](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm)

For the national emergency response capabilities of a number of NATO allies, see <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/national-disaster-management-system_en>