

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe inside. The top bulb is dark blue, and the bottom bulb is light blue. The globe is centered in the narrow neck of the hourglass. The text is centered within the hourglass.

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The NATO Summit at Riga, 2006

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Abstract. NATO leaders held a summit in Riga, Latvia, November 28-29, 2006. There were no major new initiatives. The allies concentrated their discussion on operations, above all in Afghanistan, capabilities, and partnerships. They also discussed enlargement, but no new members are likely to join the alliance for several years.

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CRS Report for Congress

The NATO Summit at Riga, 2006

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Summary

NATO leaders held a summit in Riga, Latvia, November 28-29, 2006. There were no major new initiatives. The allies concentrated their discussion on operations, above all in Afghanistan, capabilities, and partnerships. They also discussed enlargement, but no new members are likely to join the alliance for several years. This report will be updated as needed. See also CRS Report RL32342, *NATO and the European Union*, by Kristin Archick and Paul Gallis.

Introduction

The NATO summit in Riga, Latvia, on November 28-29, 2006, focused primarily on consolidation of support for existing initiatives. Above all, key allies sought to ensure that member states demonstrate the political will to provide the troops and financing necessary to bring Afghanistan to stability, expected to require five years or more. Closely associated with the NATO mission in Afghanistan was a discussion of military capabilities. NATO's "transformation" involves policies intended to enhance capabilities, develop multinational initiatives and cooperation to solve or deter international conflicts, and find funding mechanisms to ensure an appropriate sharing of the burden among member and partner states. A third theme of the summit was the evolving role of partnerships. Some allies have doubts about new rounds of enlargement; partnerships are in part a means to develop closer association with non-member governments that play a substantial role in the international community.

Operations

The effort to stabilize Afghanistan is NATO's most important mission. NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in place since 2003, now covers the entire country.¹ Its mission is to subdue a resurgent Taliban and provide a secure environment where economic reconstruction and good governance can take hold. The U.S.-led

¹ See also CRS Report RL33627, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*, by Paul Gallis.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is a separate, counter-terror operation in Afghanistan that is attempting to eradicate Al Qaeda remnants. The allies believe that the ISAF mission is central to the effort to “transform” the alliance in an era of new global threats such as terrorism and proliferation. Although ISAF’s core is NATO member states, the mission has a distinctly broader international signature, as it operates under a U.N. resolution and includes important non-NATO states such as Australia and Japan. “Transformation” also involves new capabilities, such as more deployable forces, and multinational formations using advanced communications and combat technologies, all evident in Afghanistan.²

There is a growing sense of anxiety in the alliance about Afghanistan’s future. A Taliban insurgency is underway at a time when public support for the government of President Hamid Karzai appears to be waning due to corruption and ineffective policies. For NATO, some observers believe that there is an inherent tension in simultaneously undertaking a combat mission and a stabilization and reconstruction effort. NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer has said that “there is no military solution. The answer is development, nation-building of roads, schools.”³ He has repeatedly urged international donors to meet their pledges of assistance.

The central element of ISAF’s stabilization effort is the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), of which NATO operates 24 around the country. PRTs consist of civil-military teams that provide security and undertake reconstruction projects, such as the building of roads and hospitals. In addition, they support regional officials sent by the Karzai government to extend the authority of Kabul. The success of ISAF may depend upon the ability of the Karzai government, and its successors, to develop good governance in a country that has long known corruption, violent tribal competition for territory and resources, and minimal central authority. Afghanistan’s vigorous and growing narcotics trade, centered around poppy farms and heroin production, is an additional factor that the international community must overcome to stabilize the country.

NATO currently has 37,000 troops in ISAF (of which approximately 17,000 are from the United States), the bulk of whom are in the south fighting a Taliban and warlord insurgency. NATO commanders have asked member states for more troops to quell the insurgency, but governments have been reluctant to send more combat troops in part due to public concern over casualties, which have been increasing, and over availability of troops, as some governments such as Italy and France have substantial contingents committed to peace operations in Lebanon, Kosovo, and elsewhere.

National “caveats” are impeding ISAF’s mission. Some governments place strictures on how and where their forces may be used. For example, the German parliament prohibits the country’s ISAF contingent from going outside relatively stable northern Afghanistan, where they are located; they cannot be used in more restive parts of the country. Some governments restrict the use of certain types of equipment at night. There is also no mobile ISAF emergency force in Afghanistan able to move rapidly around the

² Gen. David Richards, “NATO in Afghanistan: Transformation on the Front Line,” *RUSI*, August 2006. Gen. Richards is the current ISAF commander.

³ “NATO Chief Urges Overhaul of Afghanistan Effort,” *International Herald Tribune*, Nov. 6, 2006, p. 1.

country to reinforce troops wherever violence flares. At the summit, France and Italy lifted their caveats; their forces may now fight where needed in Afghanistan. Timeliness, however, remains an issue. If there is an urgent need for such forces, will the French or Italian commander first call Paris or Rome to obtain permission to move their forces into harm's way? Germany refused to lift its caveats.⁴

NATO has operations in other distant theaters that are testing the allies' political will and military capabilities. KFOR (Kosovo Force) in Kosovo has been in place since 1999. Under a U.N. imprimatur, KFOR is charged with maintaining a secure environment, supporting an international civil administration, and controlling ethnic violence. The international community is seeking to resolve Kosovo's final status, likely to be a form of independence from Serbia, but any solution is unlikely to be fully embraced by the Kosovo Albanians and the Serb minority. In such circumstances, NATO forces, now numbering 17,000, may remain in some form for a period of time.⁵

NATO has other operations as well. NATO supports the African Union mission in Darfur to protect refugees with assistance in training, logistics, and intelligence. The allies have a small training mission inside and outside Iraq for that country's military officers. One other mission, *Active Endeavor*, is a counter-terror effort in the Mediterranean that controls shipping traffic in the search for weapons of mass destruction.

Capabilities

At Riga, the allies declared the NATO Response Force (NRF) fully operational. The NRF has 20,000-25,000 soldiers, supplied on rotation by member governments, in a high-readiness state. The NRF is an insertion force, able to reach its destination within 5-30 days. One of its key characteristics is flexibility; NATO can create NRF packages sized, for example, for humanitarian assistance, naval operations, or high intensity conflict on land. The allies did not resolve the issue of what types of missions the NRF should engage; some believe that it should be used only for combat; others favor such missions as humanitarian assistance.

The NRF has brought to the forefront the emerging issue of how to fund NATO operations. NATO now operates under the principle of "costs lie where they fall," meaning that governments that send troops to an operation pay for their own troops. Because Spain was leading the NRF on rotation during the Pakistani earthquake, Madrid bore costs substantially disproportionate to those of other allied governments. The current system of paying for operations is therefore a disincentive for some governments to participate. In addition, some NATO members, such as Iceland, Luxembourg, and Belgium, have no or minimal armed forces; larger states tend to bear much of the burden for operations. The Bush Administration and several other allies have proposed that all governments bear a proportional cost of operations, and that some equipment be bought and maintained jointly by the alliance. At Riga, the allies were unable to agree to common funding for the NRF.

⁴ Interviews with European and U.S. officials, December 2006.

⁵ See CRS Report RL31053, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy*, by Julie Kim and Steven Woehrel; interviews with U.S. and European officials, December 2006.

In September 2006, fourteen allies, including the United States, joined to form a “Strategic Airlift Capability” (SAC) and pledged to buy four large transport planes — the Boeing C-17 — in 2007. NATO operations have long been in need of sufficient air transport, and the joint funding effort is a considerable step towards meeting that need.

At Riga, the allies launched an initiative to develop a core of available Special Operations Forces (SOF), which they might call upon for operations. NATO is attempting to build forces for irregular, counter-insurgency warfare, for which SOF are well-suited. SOF are heavily utilized, for example, in Afghanistan. Joint use of such forces can be difficult, given the differing signatures that different governments give such units⁶

NATO and Its Partners

As part of NATO’s “transformation,” the allies are engaging countries that see similar threats and have the political will to contribute to security. This development is in part the result of the emergence of terrorism and WMD proliferation as global threats, and in part the result of concerted action by the alliance to persuade non-member governments that there is much to be gained from closer consultation and joint operations.

U.S. officials wish to see NATO become “a platform for allies to work together to meet common needs,” in concert with international organizations such as the U.N. and the EU, and non-member states.⁷ This effort is most evident in Afghanistan, where non-member states such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan have contributed forces or lead Provincial Reconstruction Teams. It is also evident in NATO’s *Operation Active Endeavor*, the counter-terror and counter-proliferation operation in the Mediterranean noted above.

Not all NATO governments are enthusiastic about the partnership program. Some governments, for example, wish to limit Israel’s association with NATO. They rule out the possibility of contemplating eventual membership for Israel in the alliance as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict endures. Some governments also believe that the idea of advanced partnerships brings Israel and some Partnership for Peace states with authoritarian governments, such as Kazakhstan, too close to the alliance. Some also believe that the partnership program dilutes the “Atlantic” nature of the alliance.⁸

There was a surprise development in the Partnership for Peace program at Riga. The Bush Administration had long opposed Serbia’s entry into PfP, until Belgrade sends accused war criminals from the Kosovo conflict to The Hague for trial. However, President Bush reportedly answered an appeal from Serbian leadership to admit Serbia

⁶ *Riga Summit Declaration*, Nov. 29, 2006, p. 7.

⁷ Victoria Nuland, “NATO: A 21st Century Alliance That Is Delivering,” remarks at the Center for European Policy Studies, Brussels, Oct. 30, 2006. Ambassador Nuland is the U.S. permanent representative to NATO.

⁸ Interviews with allied government officials at the NATO Defense College, Rome, Dec. 18, 2006; Speech by the NATO Deputy Secretary General, “Mediterranean Dialogue,” Oct. 24, 2006.

to PFP as a way to mitigate any potential popular response should Kosovo soon gain independence.⁹ The EU retains its prohibition against Serbian associate status.

Selected Other Issues

Some critics believe that the Riga summit accomplished little, other than consolidation of existing initiatives. Member governments' forces are clearly stretched, given NATO operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Darfur, and non-NATO European-led operations in Africa and Lebanon. Enhancement of capabilities, development of the concept of partnership, and extensive training missions in a range of non-member states have absorbed resources and energy. In addition, more attention to political discussions is evident at NATO: the allies meet with energy specialists to explore enhancement of energy security, and routinely discuss the threats posed by Iran and North Korea. Energy security is clearly an emerging issue in the alliance. Protection of vulnerable pipelines in such countries as Nigeria and Kazakhstan or escorting oil tankers in time of conflict are matters under discussion among several allied governments. Senator Lugar has proposed that energy security become an Article V mission.¹⁰

Iran. At the same time, a consensus is lacking on such issues. Some allies believe that the United States and the EU-3, and not NATO, should manage the attempt to limit Iran's nuclear program, or that energy security is an issue best left to market forces and managed through the European Union.¹¹

Enlargement. Enlargement of the alliance remains an issue of debate. Representative Tanner and Senator Lugar have introduced bills (H.R. 987 and S. 494, respectively) that endorse further enlargement of NATO. The bills state the principle that NATO remains open to qualified candidates; encourage the three candidate states, Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia, to continue to work to qualify for membership; and note the interest in Georgia and Ukraine to one day gain membership. The bills underscore the need for candidate and other interested governments to meet the qualifications for membership.

By some accounts, each of the three candidate states has recently slipped somewhat in its efforts to make substantial progress in its Membership Action Plan (MAP), which requires candidates to modernize their militaries, limit corruption, develop a strong rule of law, and achieve other objectives. Although some U.S. officials have recently given alternative possible dates for Croatia's entry as 2008 or 2009, others note that a majority of the Croatian people do not support NATO membership.¹² The opposition in Macedonia has boycotted the parliament, an extraordinary development in a modern democracy. Albania is a poor country with minimal resources and a small military.

⁹ Interviews with U.S. officials, December 2006.

¹⁰ Speech at Riga, Nov. 22, 2006.

¹¹ CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Vince L. Morelli; and CRS Report RS22409, *NATO and Energy Security*, by Paul Gallis.

¹² Interviews with U.S. officials, May-November 2006.

At the same time, each of the three governments has made considerable progress in establishing important democratic institutions in the past decade. Changes of government have been orderly. The governments participate in important NATO missions, such as in Afghanistan. And the leaders of the three governments, and most opposition parties, strongly desire both NATO and EU membership.

Some European allies wish to move slowly on further enlargement. In the European Union there is clearly “enlargement fatigue” as member governments wonder whether a new round of enlargement might dilute the identity of the Union, complicate decision-making, and shake prospects for economic growth. The issues in NATO are somewhat different. Clearly, decision-making in NATO has become more complicated as membership has grown from sixteen to twenty-six states in less than a decade. Other issues pose greater problems, such as relations with and sharing of defense resources with the European Union, or finding a clear consensus on NATO missions, now built increasingly around political objectives such as stabilization and reconstruction, as in Afghanistan, in addition to the traditional mission of collective defense.

Equally problematic for the Europeans is the consideration of two prospective candidate states, Ukraine and the Republic of Georgia. Earlier in 2006, the Bush Administration considered proposing to the allies that both countries be advanced to the MAP process. Some European allies, such as Germany and France, do not wish to damage relations with Russia by consideration of Ukraine and Georgia or rapid advancement of those countries in the partnership process, such as participation in a MAP. Ukraine has a large Russian population and great economic potential that Moscow does not wish to see wrested from its sphere. There is a division in Ukraine over possible membership in NATO. The current Prime Minister opposes his country’s membership, a step effectively removing the country from near-term consideration for a path to membership. Georgia has two border and ethnic conflicts, sometimes aggressively fueled by Russia, that give the Tblisi government pronounced strategic problems. The allies offered Georgia an “Intensified Dialogue” in early 2006, a modest but clear way station on the course to a MAP and possible eventual consideration for membership.¹³

Congressional Action

Congress held a broad range of hearings in the 109th Congress on NATO issues, such as the conflict in Afghanistan, NATO partnerships, capabilities, and political will in the alliance to counter the threats of terrorism and proliferation. Such oversight hearings are again likely in the 110th Congress. In particular, it is possible that Congress will debate the level of U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, and what types of financial and developmental assistance are necessary to stabilize the country.

NATO and energy security remains an emerging issue. Senator Lugar and others introduced a bill, S. 2435, on energy security in March 2006. Hearings were held, and there may be similar interest in such a bill in the 110th Congress. In addition, he introduced a bill on NATO enlargement, the “NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2006,” S. 4014, which passed the Senate. No action was taken in the House. As noted above in the discussion of enlargement, two bills are now before Congress on the issue.

¹³ Interviews with U.S. officials and officials in allied governments, May-November 2006.