



New Ambitions for NATO

At June's defense ministerial in Brussels, NATO defense ministers adopted a new level of ambition for operations that seeks to transform the alliance into a force focused on small-scale deployments. Though the document was not released publicly, reports indicate that the new level shifts footing from "planning for one big war" to emphasizing brigade and division level deployments. Under this plan, NATO will prepare to execute simultaneously two major operations of 60,000 troops and up to six smaller operations featuring as many as 30,000 soldiers. This shift to smaller missions reflects a consensus in the organization that future threats are less likely to involve existential struggles in Europe, but rather small-scale deployments for stabilization, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. While these plans make sense on paper, there are some questions about NATO's ability to implement them.

NATO's focus on smaller operations is not revolutionary—NATO troops are currently in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iraq and the Mediterranean. In some ways, the new level of ambition simply signals a political decision to affirm the present course and be able to better answer future challenges. NATO has seen successes in its deployments in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and humanitarian assistance missions such as the one to Pakistan following the earthquake last year have been well received. The new level of ambition also codifies the realization by the defense ministers that the threats faced by NATO members do not come from large well-equipped armies, and will often need to be confronted by smaller deployments farther from Europe.

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The Promise of Transatlantic Special Operations Forces

It is no secret that special operations forces occupy a central position in the war against terrorism. From large contributions to operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, to smaller efforts in Africa and Asia, U.S. and allied SOF units have every reason to work together. In the war against terrorism, SOF have been, are, and will continue to be front and center.

SOF forces are among the most utilized capabilities in European militaries today. Numerous European nations have contributed SOF units to NATO operations in Afghanistan or coalition efforts in Iraq, including Denmark, Germany, Norway, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have also contributed SOF units.

Considering the much debated capability gap between the United States and its allies, special operations forces usually punch well above their weight when operating in multinational environments. Highly trained, typically far more interoperable than other forces, and able to deploy very rapidly, SOF capabilities are ideal contributions from countries with only limited capabilities for coalition operations that occur far from their borders. According to Major General Gary Harrell, who in 2005 led U.S. Central Command's Combined Forces Special Operations Component, coalition SOF units make contributions far in excess of their numbers. Given the centrality of SOF units to the entire range of irregular warfare missions that dominate the current and predicted threat environment, investment in these capabilities is rising across the board.

Paradoxically however, SOF units are not well integrated into NATO relative to other capabilities, nor are there international interoperability standards for SOF. Beyond some

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IMPLICATIONS OF KOSOVA'S INDEPENDENCE

By Janusz Bugajski, Director of the New European Democracies project at CSIS

The independence of Kosova will have direct implications for the unresolved separatist conflicts around the Black Sea region. International players will need to clearly spell out why Kosova is deserving of statehood and whether the criteria for independence apply to other regions.

The Moscow-sponsored separatist movements in Transnistria (in Moldova), South Ossetia and Abkhazia (in Georgia) will be looking for precedents from Kosova. To prevent a cascade of independence declarations, four persuasive arguments must be specified for Kosova against which the other entities can be measured.

First, in terms of political context, Kosova was an autonomous region and a federal unit under the Yugoslav system, with clear administrative borders, a local self-government, and other institutions similar to the six Yugoslav republics, which possessed the right to secede.

The country that Kosova was part of expired in the early 1990s and the Albanian majority was not consulted by Belgrade or the EU when the Serbia-Montenegro Union was established in 2003. This artificial state also expired when Montenegro voted for independence this May.

Second, Kosovar separatism was primarily a reaction to state repression by one of the republics (Serbia), which included the abolition of Kosova's autonomy and attempted genocide against the Albanian population by the Milosevic regime.

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efforts to integrate SOF within the NATO Response Force, surprisingly little has been done to create a dedicated alliance capability in this critical area. A recent paper published by the U.S. National Defense University concludes that the "SOF of NATO members, including the United States, are not organized to collaborate for the purposes of improving capabilities, increasing preparedness, or operating jointly."¹

The NDU paper advocates establishing a dedicated SOF force of approximately 500 personnel that would constitute an 'inner core' capability for NATO. Member states would contribute SOF personnel to total 150 to 200 actual 'shooters,' with the remaining force constituting deployable C⁴ISR and support capabilities. A 'wider network' of allied SOF units would commit to cooperative training, exercises, and doctrinal development in anticipation of joint missions. Given the post-9/11 operational tempos experienced by many NATO and allied countries deploying SOF units, it is clear that both increasing SOF, and making the most efficient use of current capabilities constitute important priorities for the alliance.

In the United States, SOF capabilities occupy a prominent position in defense policy and military operations, and are central to what officials are now calling the 'long war.' Long an under-funded and under-utilized set of capabilities, U.S. SOF units have experienced a dramatic increase in operational tempo, and an 80 percent increase in funding since 9/11. In 2004, President Bush gave U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) the lead in prosecuting global counterterrorism operations. The recent Quadrennial Defense Review promised further large increases in personnel and funding. While these should be what defense journalist Sean Naylor has termed 'salad days' for American SOF, the challenges inherent in a resource-rich environment are not without a degree of risk.

A growing concern facing SOF on this side of the Atlantic is determining the correct balance between direct and indirect action capabilities. Direct action forces are those tasked with the man-hunting, assault, and reconnaissance missions that are useful against high-value targets. Indirect action forces, like the Army's famed 'Green Berets,' are trained in unconventional warfare and foreign internal defense operations, which are typically conducted *by, with, or through* indigenous forces. Some analysts are concerned that indirect capabilities – which stand the best chance of addressing the underlying conditions that lead to the types of instability that threaten the United States and Europe – are not receiving the attention they both warrant and deserve.²

In Europe however, unique capabilities exist that, while not typically thought of as SOF, are similar to U.S. civil affairs or, indeed, the Army's Special Forces. Several European countries possess constabulary forces that, properly resourced and employed, could make valuable contributions to current and future coalition operations. From the Italian *Carabinieri* to the French *Gendarmerie*, numerous European constabulary units have deployed overseas in various peacekeeping

operations. David Armitage and Anne Moisan from NDU have recommended that the new European Gendarmerie Force and other constabulary capabilities be encouraged "to participate in the postcombat phase of multinational military operations."³ At the very least, it is clear that the European Union is attempting to create capability at precisely the point on the spectrum of irregular warfare where the United States has arguably much less of a comparative advantage. In the field of transatlantic security, where one could be excused for growing tired of hearing the familiar U.S.-Europe 'capability gap' refrain, Europeans are well positioned to make a disproportionate contribution in indirect action capabilities.

Finally, while U.S. SOF number approximately 55,000 personnel, more than 85 percent of those deployed operate in Central Command's area of responsibility, leaving much of the world relatively uncovered. At a recent conference in Germany, SOF officers from North America and Europe met to discuss how best to create theater security in regions threatened by instability and terrorism, particularly Africa. Given the unique history and knowledge many European countries have with Africa, it may be appropriate for NATO and the European Union to consider whether growing continental SOF capabilities could and should help to build partner capacity in Africa and other regions where European countries have both interest and cultural awareness. Indeed, NATO members should meet on a regular basis to determine how best to allocate their collective SOF capabilities to enhance security in priority regions.

In conceptualizing both the process and the promise of integrating a growing set of U.S. and allied SOF capabilities, it is helpful to consider what U.S. commanders at SOCOM consider to be the four "SOF Truths": humans are more important than hardware; quality is better than quantity; SOF cannot be mass produced; and competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur. The first three of these 'truths' should encourage defense leaders from allied countries with flat or declining defense budgets that investments in SOF capabilities can create disproportionate value to NATO and allied operations. The last 'truth' should give a sense of urgency to all those tasked with developing SOF to meet the challenges of an irregular threat environment today and tomorrow. - MF

CSIS Research Associate Shawn Brimley co-wrote this article.

Footnotes

¹ David Gompert and Raymond Smith, "Creating a NATO Special Operations Force," *Defense Horizons* (National Defense University, March 2006)

² See David Tucker and Christopher Lamb, "Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats," *Strategic Forum* (National Defense University, January 2006)

³ David Armitage and Anne Moisan, "Constabulary Forces and Postconflict Transition: The Euro-Atlantic Dimension," *Strategic Forum* (National Defense University, November 2005)

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Kosova's push for statehood was not engineered or promoted by a neighboring country to maintain political pressure on a nearby state. It can also be convincingly argued that Serbia lost its right to govern a population whose government sought to systematically expel or murder.

Third, in terms of ethnic composition, over 92 percent of the current population of Kosova is Albanian and overwhelmingly endorses statehood. Even if all of the Serbian residents who fled after the NATO intervention in 1999 returned, the vast majority of Kosova inhabitants would still vote for independence.

Fourth, Kosova is an international protectorate that is developing a democratic political structure supervised by NATO, the EU, and the UN. The democratization process is far from complete but the major international players will continue to supervise the emerging state, provide security, and offer incentives for Kosova's eventual NATO and EU membership.

Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia do not meet all four of these arguments or criteria for statehood. In fact, the closest case to Kosova may be Chechnya within the Russian Federation, particularly in terms of the first three points. However, it is highly unlikely that Moscow would utilize the Kosova precedent by conceding to Chechnya's right to independence.

Moscow exploits the simmering conflicts in the breakaway regions of nearby states to apply pressure on governments seeking Western integration while it has brutally crushed the Chechen independence movement. The unrecognized regimes in Transnistria, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia have close ties to Russian military, security services, economic interest groups, and criminal networks that serve Kremlin foreign policy interests.

Moscow must be clearly told by Washington and Brussels that support for separatist movements in Moldova and Georgia is likely to rebound negatively on Russia. It will increasingly alienate and isolate Russia from the West, contribute to exacerbating regional conflicts, and provide precedents in the increasingly turbulent North Caucasus.

Furthermore, in the Caucasus—unlike in the Balkans—independence movements among Muslim populations have been radicalized by the injection of militant Islamist influence and the participation of foreign terrorists. Over the next decade, as tensions increase and state repression accelerates in Russia, the last remaining post-Communist federation may also begin to fracture.

Transatlantic Cooperation in Darfur: Beyond NATO

Earlier this month, the African Union (AU) requested additional support from NATO for its mission in Sudan. While NATO is still considering that request, it will likely respond favorably by providing training and certification, assisting the AU with lessons learned and helping the AU set up a Joint Operations Center.

For Europeans and Americans who have been wringing their hands over the crisis in Darfur this might seem like good news. However, even if NATO expands its role in Darfur, it will never be the panacea for this grave humanitarian crisis. Because Khartoum is opposed to NATO troops on Sudanese soil and NATO is not prepared to intervene without Khartoum's blessing, NATO's role will remain limited. But Europe and the United States can and should do much more to stop the violence.

First, Europe and the United States need to strengthen their cooperation and consultation, which has been sporadic to date. Transatlantic exchanges have taken place among policymakers, think tanks and NGOs. But for almost two years now, the two sides of the Atlantic have failed to design and implement anything resembling a coordinated strategy. What is needed is a "contact group," a mechanism used in other conflicts such as Kosovo and Sierra Leone to bring interested parties to the table on a regular basis. A Darfur contact group could elevate the status of transatlantic dialogue on Darfur, develop a common transatlantic strategy and enhance the partners' overall effectiveness.

Second, the two sides of the Atlantic should focus exclusively on putting a robust UN peacekeeping force in Darfur. Virtually all of the major players (except the Sudanese of course) agree that this is the only viable option for a resolution of the conflict. Getting the UN to Darfur will require Europe and the United States to put increased pressure on Khartoum to both accept a UN force and stop obstructing the planning process. A coordinated and public shaming campaign, repeatedly highlighting Khartoum's reprehensible record of non-adherence to its international commitments might help undermine their reticence toward a UN force.

Third, because any UN solution is at least six months away from implementation, Europe and the United States should focus on short-term fixes that can keep the fragile Darfur Peace Agreement intact. That means doing everything possible to support the AU role on the ground and planning for a possible stabilization force before the UN would arrive. The stabilization force, which France might consider leading with its troops just across the border in Chad, could supplement the AU's civilian protection efforts through the enforcement of a no-fly zone.

While Darfur certainly isn't a top foreign policy priority on either side of the Atlantic, both Europe and the United States have invested significant resources and political capital in bringing an end to the conflict. What they have not done, however, is find a way to maximize their investments by working together. As is the case for many foreign policy challenges facing Europe and the United States today, a lasting solution can only come from a genuine and muscular transatlantic partnership. - JS

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The new operational focus also supports the continuing emphasis on transforming alliance forces into leaner, more deployable units. Much has been made about how the initial U.S. invasion of Iraq focused on smaller, more independent and flexible formations to great tactical advantage. The new NATO level of ambition seems to embrace this concept, at least from a long-range planning perspective. NATO's attempt to seek strategic partnerships with like-minded nations also suggests a more collaborative approach to security, particularly in Asia. NATO deployments may act as supplementary rather than primary forces in these collaborative situations. In today's fluid security environment, any attempt by NATO to be more flexible and responsive to challenges is a welcome direction for the alliance.

Several challenges must be confronted before NATO can realistically expect to implement this new level of ambition. The most obvious problem NATO needs to confront is force generation. The difficulty in meeting the NRF requirements shows how hard it is to generate an agile force—and with a strategy of multiple small NATO deployments, the funding inequities that plague the NRF will be exacerbated. Short of a common operational funding pool, this level of ambition could be extremely difficult to meet. The trend of declining defense budgets across Europe only makes the multiple deployments called for more difficult to sustain. The same lift and logistics problems that have plagued NATO efforts in Afghanistan will continue to be an obstacle until more work is completed in these areas as well.

The other noticeable challenges NATO will have to overcome are how this new direction influences NATO's interactions with the EU and United States. Multiple small deployments seem to echo the European Union's battle group concept, and some overlap of the forces committed to both NATO deployments and the EU battle groups seems inevitable. The new European Defense Agency will also need to continue to direct European militaries to research projects that fit into the "leaner-and-meaner" model that NATO has adopted. Finally, NATO should consider how a focus on smaller deployments would affect its relationship with the United States. If the allied nations see this as an opportunity to develop a capability to respond to long-distance threats with limited U.S. assistance, it will be a tremendous boon to the alliance. If some in the alliance simply view this new level of ambition as a draw-down of forces or an opportunity to commit greater resources to nascent EU military projects, NATO may find itself stuck in the position of playing firefighter—only deploying after a situation has been pacified and stuck with the often more onerous task of reconstruction.

NATO should be applauded for finally giving up the need to plan for a desperate struggle in the Fulda Gap. The current security challenges faced by the alliance require less overwhelming force and more mobility and agility. Now the alliance faces the critical challenge of converting this new document, born out of the new Comprehensive Political Guidance, into a reality that allows a more nimble and deployable force structure to emerge. This declaration was an expected first step along the path of transformation, and much work remains before the ending endorsed by the defense ministers in Brussels is an operational reality. - JW

June Recent Developments

- NATO launched Operation Steadfast Jaguar in the Cape Verde Islands on June 15-June 28. Steadfast Jaguar was a major readiness exercise for the NATO Response Force, and featured the combined air, sea and land assets of the NRF for the first time. This is the last major exercise planned before the NRF stands up in October.
- In late May, the European Court of Justice struck down the current arrangement for sharing airline passenger information between the European Union and United States. Officials on both sides are looking for ways to continue to share the data in accordance with European data protection rules.

Correction

The May issue of Transatlantic Security Notes & Comments contained an article by Jeremiah Gertler regarding the state of missile defense in Europe. The analysis was based in part on an erroneous understanding of the scope of the NATO ALTBMD program. To spare readers a laborious post-mortem, the author wishes simply to withdraw the article, and emphasizes that any error was solely his responsibility, and in no way that of CSIS or the editors of Transatlantic Security Notes & Comments. The author and editors are grateful to Dr. Michael Rance for providing a thorough-going criticism. This publication will revisit the issue of missile defense in Europe and transatlantic cooperation on the issue as developments warrant.

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