



Briefing Paper No.36

20 May 2013

Contact: Dr. Ian Davis | +44 (0)7887 782389

Email: idavis@natowatch.org

www.natowatch.org

NATO military commanders get together to decide how to advise political leaders



169th NATO Chiefs of Defence meeting

Brussels | 14 - 15 May 2013



By Nigel Chamberlain, NATO Watch

In the presence of the media, [General Knud Bartels](#), Chairman of the Military Committee, welcomed the [28 NATO Chiefs of Defence](#) and the Strategic Commanders to their second Military Committee meeting of the year on 14 May.

Since their last meeting in January, Bartels noted that:

- The economic crisis continues to worsen, forcing the Alliance to further reduce defence spending.
- World events have reinforced the need for NATO to provide agile, adaptable and affordable capabilities to cope with unpredictable security threats.
- The potential, maturity and increased autonomy of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) show that the process of transition to support Afghan security is still ongoing.

He asked participants to recall the urgency of many of the issues that they would be considering and welcomed the constructive discussions that take place between the Allies and partners. He reminded them that their goal is to provide timely, relevant and agreed advice to the North Atlantic Council in support of NATO's strategic objectives. His objectives for their meeting were to:

- provide clear military guidance on the

conduct of the remaining 19 months of the ISAF mission and unambiguous recommendations for the planning for the Resolute Support mission;

- deliver progress on the commitment to continue to build upon common interests of regional security and shared understanding with Special Partners Georgia, Russia and Ukraine;
- consider the implications for the NATO mission in Kosovo of the new conditions established following the recent historic agreement between Pristina and Belgrade;
- organise a high visibility exercise in 2015 to mark the new transformation direction of NATO and test its command and force structure;
- endorse the ongoing work on the implementation of the interconnection initiative and future NATO training concept; and
- implement and support the command structure of NATO and start studying the

proposals that have been made to mitigate capability shortfalls.

(Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session – photo credit NATO)

Bartels said that they would be joined by the new Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Breedlove, by the EU Commission's Director



General for Energy and Transport, Mr Philip Lowe, who would provide “a contextual brief” for the transformation discussions and by the Commander ISAF, General Joseph Dunford, for their discussions on the current and future missions in Afghanistan.



[General Breedlove](#) took over command of NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) from Admiral Stavridis during a handover ceremony in Mons, Belgium on 13 May (photo credit: NATO). He said:

Within the borders of our Alliance we enjoy unprecedented levels of stability, but beyond our frontiers there is uncertainty and insecurity. As SACEUR my first and enduring priority will be to ensure that NATO remains vigilant and prepared to meet the challenges and threats of the future with agile, capable, and interoperable military forces.

Over the course of the two days the Military Committee met in the following formats:

- Chiefs of Defence Session (MC/CS);
- MC/CS with ISAF non-NATO Contributing Nations;
- MC/CS with KFOR non-NATO Contributing Nations;
- MC/CS in NATO-Georgia Commission format;
- MC/CS in NATO-Ukraine Commission format;
- MC/CS in NATO-Russia Council format; and
- MC/CS - Transformation Sessions.

General Bartels gave a positive and rather detailed introduction at the start of his [press conference](#) after the two-days of meetings (photo credit: NATO). The following are edited highlights of the Chiefs of Staff discussions:

Afghanistan

The commitment to support the ISAF Commander in Afghanistan over the next 19 months was reconfirmed. This will be crucial in determining the outcome of the mission. A comprehensive counter-insurgency effort is being

supported until the end of 2014, and this will be increasingly Afghan-led. The increased capability of the ANSF to provide security for their country was acknowledged. Transition remains on track and the Military Committee assessment is on the whole positive. Afghanistan post-2014 and the new mission, 'Resolute Support' were also discussed. Good progress was made during the discussions and details on the Concept of Operations for the new mission will be finalised in the coming weeks, ready for the Defence Ministers to discuss at the beginning of June.

[General Dempsey](#), the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, later told reporters that the discussion about the post-2014 NATO presence in Afghanistan was lively and constructive.

The Chiefs of Defence looked at whether the Alliance should take a regional or national approach to the post-2014 situation. Each scenario would have a different requirement for troops, equipment, bases and money. There are pros and cons for each and these discussions will provide a basis for making recommendations to civilian leaders.

The Military Committee did receive a briefing on where the Afghan Army and police are doing well and where they need more work. The Afghan security forces don't need to be as good as the American military, they just have to possess the necessary skills to protect their people, Dempsey said.

Kosovo

NATO will continue to ensure a safe and secure environment throughout Kosovo. Through KFOR, the Military Committee remain optimistic with regard to the security situation in Kosovo. A significant step towards normalisation in the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia was recognised, as demonstrated by the recent agreement brokered by the European Union.

Georgia

The implementation of Georgia's defence reforms, which is an important element in Georgia's ambition for Euro-Atlantic



integration, was discussed. The opportunity was also taken to express NATO's gratitude for Georgia's significant contribution to ISAF and its commitment to participate in the post-2014 mission. Georgia continues to move closer to NATO through intensive and successful military-to-military cooperation.

Ukraine

Ukraine was thanked for its continued contributions to NATO-led operations and the NATO Response Force. Ukraine will also be participating in Operation Ocean Shield later this year, and it will be the first NATO Partner nation to make a significant contribution to this important NATO-led counter piracy operation. Ukraine has also expressed its readiness to contribute to Resolute Support in Afghanistan. Opportunities for practical military cooperation will continue to be developed, in order to improve interoperability of NATO-Ukrainian forces.

Transformation

A wide range of ongoing and future initiatives – including Smart Defence and Connected Forces, which aim to achieve best value for money while building on lessons learned from operations – were addressed during this session. The importance of preserving capacity, as well as capability, was stressed. Defence spending across the Alliance must be coherent, complementary and matched to future threats. As NATO's operational tempo is expected to decrease after 2014, emphasis will be placed on training to maintain force readiness. Clear commitment and guidance were provided for the NATO future training and exercises concept. A high visibility exercise was also discussed. This is due to take place in 2015 and will mark the shift in NATO's operational focus and test both of the Alliance's new Command and Force Structures.

Russia

The Military Committee was supportive of the ongoing cooperation between NATO and Russia through the 2013 Work Plan and discussed new initiatives for the development of the 2014 Work Plan, particularly with regard to maritime cooperation in the Mediterranean. The mutual benefits of closer dialogue were recognised. The Chairman of the Military Committee was particularly grateful for General Gerasimov's personal engagement. It was acknowledged that their open and frank discussions helped to facilitate quick communication. NATO's commitment to transparency was demonstrated by sharing information on operations and exercises. In particular, NATO provided Russian counterparts with an extensive brief on the NATO Military Exercise Steadfast Jazz 2013, which will take place in early November in a number of Allied nations, including the Baltic States and

Poland. The purpose of the exercise was explained, which is to train and test the NATO Response Force, a high readiness and technologically advanced multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and special forces components that the Alliance can deploy quickly wherever needed. In the months to come, NATO will continue to build with Russia reciprocal transparency on military exercises, thereby enhancing mutual understanding.

The General's subsequent Q & A session with the media, mainly in French, is available [here](#) (7 minute video).