

Worldwide Militarization: NATO Expands Military Network To All Continents

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD, US NATO War Agenda](#)

The top military officials - chiefs of defense staff - and other representatives of 55 North Atlantic Treaty Organization and partnership states met in Croatia on June 18-20 for the 2012 Strategic Military Partnership Conference.

NATO's Allied Command Transformation, established at the 1999 fiftieth anniversary summit in Washington, D.C. and the first alliance command based in the U.S. (in Norfolk, Virginia), reported that participation came from "numerous partnership nations that came from all over the world including South America, North Africa, the South Pacific and East Asia" and that attending nations were members of the bloc's Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and other military partnerships.

The first of the above three includes 21 nations in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.) The Partnership for Peace program was employed to prepare the twelve nations incorporated as full members between 1999 and 2009: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Mediterranean Dialogue members are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. As will be seen below, Libya is scheduled to be the next partner.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are members of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, with Saudi Arabia and Oman being groomed as new members and perhaps Iraq and Yemen behind them.

The nations in attendance at the NATO meeting in the Croatian capital of Zagreb, subtitled Current and Future Challenges, would have included what were formerly referred to as Contact Countries - Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea - and which are now included in a new category called Partners Across the Globe along with Afghanistan, Iraq, Mongolia and Pakistan.

The South American nation(s) were not identified, but NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral James Stavridis, recently identified El Salvador in Central America and Colombia in South America, respectively, as current and future NATO partners and troop contributors in Afghanistan. This March Stavridis told Congress that Brazil and India also

were potential NATO partners.

Before assuming the joint roles of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe and commander of U.S. European Command in 2009, Stavridis was commander of U.S. Southern Command and as such in charge of American military operations and military-to-military relations in Central America, South America and the Caribbean. In 2007 the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 conducted "presence operations" in the Caribbean Sea, the first time that alliance warships deployed there.

The inclusion of South America marks the crossing of a new threshold for NATO: It now has members and partners on all six inhabited continents, accounting for over a third of the nations in the world.

In January NATO's Military Committee held a meeting in chiefs of defense staff session in which, as the NATO website described it, "Top level military representatives of 67 countries [discussed] in various formats the evolution of NATO and NATO led operations, the implementation of the new NATO Command Structure and its military consequences." Unprecedented in scope, the military leaders present accounted for over a third of the 194 member states of the United Nations.

The Strategic Military Partnership Conference in Croatia was held a month after the NATO summit in Chicago and concentrated on the results of the latter and the further implementation of the Strategic Concept adopted at the preceding summit in Portugal in late 2010.

French General Stéphane Abrial, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, opened the three-day conference and placed particular emphasis on two initiatives NATO calls the Connected Forces Initiative and Smart Defense. The second is designed to pool the resources of the bloc's 28 members states in times of economic austerity and the first to increase training and exercises and the use of compatible military equipment; both will have the effect of furthering the integration of NATO members for interoperability in furtherance of operations abroad by making a military virtue of an economic necessity.

The main aspects of Smart Defence were identified as the U.S.-dominated interceptor missile system in Europe, the purchase of American Global Hawk drones by European countries for the Alliance Ground Surveillance program and the patrolling of Baltic air space by NATO warplanes.

The conference participants then discussed three main issues: Implications of the May summit for NATO member states; Partners Stability and security in the Middle East, North Africa and the Persian Gulf Region; the Connected Forces Initiative in relation to training, exercises, education and technology. Other topics addressed included what were identified as the future development of partnerships and strategic implications of improvements to military efficiency.

The new Partners across the Globe format was highlighted in discussions on expanding partnership arrangements as were the new Partnership Cooperation Menu, the Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process, the Operational Capabilities Concept and the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme, whose first member is Mongolia as of March and one of whose next is Iraq, both now members the Partners across the Globe program as well. The latest, increasingly international, partnerships and programs are

described by NATO's Allied Command Transformation as "focused on the priorities of building capabilities, interoperability, and supporting defence and security sector reforms."

A NATO account of the conference reiterated the current Strategic Concept's assertion that "the promotion of Euro-Atlantic security is best assured through a wide network of partner relationships with countries and organizations around the globe."

In relation to the May summit, the same source stated:

"The Alliance restated its willingness to provide...further support to regional partners in such areas as security institution- building, defence modernisation, capacity development, and civil-military relations. Based on a Moroccan initiative, NATO and MD [Mediterranean Dialogue] countries will develop a new political framework. The Alliance is, moreover, prepared to welcome Libya as a new partner..."

The opening of an Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Regional Centre in Kuwait was also agreed upon at the Chicago summit.

The conference in Croatia accentuated "A framework developed for NATO nations' and partner countries' available training and exercise ranges, along standardized lines" and the "potential to integrate partners and facilitates participation in exercises."

The deepening and widening of military collaboration between NATO and its scores of partners, including integrating partnership nations into the global NATO Response Force, are to be built on joint efforts during and following NATO's wars on three continents: Those in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Libya.

As NATO has remarked of the Connected Forces Initiative, it is "aimed at ensuring that NATO retains and builds on the valuable gains of interoperability among Allies and partners as a result of NATO's recent operations."

The steady expansion of NATO military partnerships and operations around the world, which now include all populated continents, has no precedent in history. This is the first attempt to establish an international military alliance that is capable of and prepared to intervene in any nation and region it chooses to for the geopolitical benefit of its leading member states.

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