

GLOBAL MILITARY ALLIANCE: Partners Across The Globe: NATO Consolidates A Worldwide Military Force

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The military leaders of 50 nations, more than a quarter of those in the world, opened a two-day conference at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on April 25 to discuss, as the Pentagon's website described it, "the present and future of the effort in Afghanistan" and other topics.

Afghanistan being the main subject of discussion, the military chiefs of NATO's 28 member states, collectively the Military Committee, presumably met with the chiefs of defense staff of the 22 non-NATO nations supplying the alliance with troops for the war in Afghanistan.

In January top military leaders of 67 countries, over a third of those in the world, met at NATO Headquarters to discuss operations in Afghanistan in what is the largest-ever meeting of chiefs of defense staff in history.

The recently concluded expanded meeting of the NATO Military Committee was the last before next month's summit in Chicago and was largely focused on that impending event.

Participants in the conference included General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; General John R. Allen (in teleconference), commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, in charge of the largest foreign military force ever to be stationed in that nation; NATO's two top military commanders, Supreme Allied Commander Europe Admiral James Stavridis and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Stéphane Abrial; U.S. military chief Dempsey's equivalents from 49 nations in Europe, North America, Central America, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Northeast Asia, South East Asia and the South Pacific supplying troops for NATO's Afghan War. (Armenia, Austria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bosnia, El Salvador, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Jordan, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Tonga, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.)

In short, NATO's 21st century global expeditionary force and its top commanders. An international military coalition never authorized by the United Nations or discussed at any conference or other fora except at NATO Headquarters and at the bloc's summits.

On the second day of the Military Committee conference in Brussels, NATO's Allied Command Operations reported on a training course underway at the Allied Joint Force Command Headquarters in Brunssum, the Netherlands where staff officers from NATO's Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative military partnerships are being instructed to "work as augmentees in a Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJF HQ) environment.

NATO added, "DJF HQ serves as an example of a Joint HQ for non-NATO nations to contribute to the Alliance's missions."

"Many of the attending nations already share close ties with NATO and have taken part in NATO's missions, including the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan."

Participating officers were from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Qatar, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.

At the gathering of military chiefs on April 25 and 26, subjects addressed were NATO's wars and occupations in three continents: In addition to the ten-and-a-half- year conflict in Afghanistan, NATO's top brass discussed missions in Kosovo (Kosovo Force), off the Horn of Africa (Operation Ocean Shield), in Libya (Operation Unified Protector), the Mediterranean Sea (Operation Active Endeavor) and no doubt others. Most everywhere, indeed, but on or near the Atlantic Ocean, north or south.

Reporting on the conference, the Pentagon's website paraphrased an unnamed senior Defense Department official, "speaking on background," as affirming that "Every opportunity for NATO members and their partners to work together helps to keep the alliance moving forward...especiall y as they seek to improve interoperability [and] refine tactics and procedures.. ."

Quoted directly, the source added:

"NATO remains a very strong partnership – as strong as ever – and we have a lot of demonstrated successes with NATO if you look at the history up through today and current events, and especially in the last year. So I think that bodes well for the future of the partnership. The United States involvement in NATO is a strong partnership for tackling any future challenges."

The Pentagon account also mentioned meetings between the assembled military chiefs and representatives of Georgia and Ukraine, within the NATO-Georgia Commission and NATO-Ukraine Commission frameworks, and of the NATO-Russia Council.

The top military commanders also discussed what in a Pentagon report on the conference was alluded to as Pacific perspectives.

The North Atlantic Alliance in fact has a Pacific strategy. Most of the most recent additions to NATO's Troop Contributing Countries in Afghanistan have come from Asia-Pacific nations: Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore, South Korea and Tonga. Japan has dispatched military personnel, medics, as well. Australia and New Zealand have had troops, including special forces, engaged in combat operations in Afghanistan for years. With 1,550 soldiers assigned to the International Security Assistance Force, Australia is the largest troop provider to that NATO operation of any non-NATO country.

The Afghan war has been employed by the U.S. and NATO to forge an unprecedented 50-nation interoperable military force and the bloc has formalized the arrangements initiated to that end with its new Strategic Concept adopted at the last NATO summit in Portugal in late 2010. At a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Berlin a year ago the alliance endorsed a new partnership format, a uniform Partnership Cooperation Menu (with approximately 1,600

activities), to strengthen already existing military cooperation programs and to expand its network of military partnerships throughout the world.

In addition to the Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative programs – in Europe and Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf, respectively – NATO has a new category it calls partners across the globe, which as its name indicates has no geographical boundaries.

NATO lists Partnership for Peace members, which with the alliance's 28 members are subsumed under the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, as:

Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Its Mediterranean Dialogue partners are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners are Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, with Saudi Arabia and Oman next in line.

Partners across the globe are, to date, though subject to expansion, Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan and South Korea.

The new Partnership Cooperation Menu provides for a new type of global NATO partnership arrangement called an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme. The first country to be enrolled in it was Mongolia last month. With Kazakhstan, NATO now has two partners that border both China and Russia.

The issue of Israel employing the Partnership Cooperation Menu to secure Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme status like Mongolia (in 2006 Israel was the first nation to be granted membership in another NATO partnership modality, the Individual Cooperation Program) has arisen lately in regard to reports that Turkey has blocked Israel's participation at next month's NATO summit to prevent the above reaching fruition.

The Partnership Cooperation Menu became effective the first of this year and initial plans were to grant the above-mentioned program to Israel and other members of the Mediterranean Dialogue.

NATO is cultivating Iraq and Yemen for prospective Istanbul Cooperation Initiative membership and Libya for membership in the Mediterranean Dialogue, with Lebanon and Syria (in the event of a change in regime) after it. With Iraq the partnership with the Western military organization is a continuation of the seven-year NATO Training Mission-Iraq.

In reference to partners across the globe, NATO maintains that "Japan is NATO's longest-standing global partner," adding:

"At their meeting in Berlin in April 2011, Allied foreign ministers listed Japan as one of NATO's partners across the globe. As such, in the framework of the establishment of a single Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM) open to all NATO partners, Japan will be able to access a wide range of cooperation activities with the Alliance and develop a more effective

individual programme.”

Article 9 of the Japanese constitution expressly forbids the nation entering into any form of collective self-defense. A formal partnership with the world’s only military bloc is doing just that.

The government of South Korea has stated: “Following the new partnership policy of NATO approved in the NATO Ministerial meeting in Berlin, Germany in April 2011, the Republic of Korea is committed to further developing its partnership with NATO and to deepening practical cooperation with the trans-Atlantic defense organization. “

Pakistan is another nation that has expressed interest in the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme.

Afghanistan, whose new military is being developed for interoperability with those of the major Western powers through the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan, is another candidate.

The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of a truly worldwide military alliance, one which in regard to the number of members and partners, geographic range, defense capabilities and universal ambitions is staggering.

As the war council in Brussels was underway, Italian Defense Minister Giampaolo di Paola (former chairman of the NATO Military Committee) while speaking at a NATO Smart Defense Agenda meeting in Rome advocated the establishment of ties between the military bloc and the BRICS nations (Russia, Brazil, India, China and South Africa), asserting that “the Alliance must have a global vision and must take responsibility for the problems concerning security on a global level,” according to Agenzia Giornalistica Italia.

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