

# NATO War Council To Target Syria

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*On Tuesday, June 26 Belgium time the North Atlantic Council, the highest governing body of the U.S.-dominated North Atlantic Treaty Organization military bloc, will take up the issue of Syria under provisions of its founding document that in the past ten and a half years have resulted in military deployments preparatory to and the subsequent waging of full-scale wars.*

The ambassadors of the alliance's 28 member states constitute the council, nations whose collective population is 900 million. Its founding members include three nuclear powers – the U.S., Britain and France – the first the self-proclaimed world's sole military superpower.

Until the day before the meeting NATO was to take up a request by member Turkey to hold consultations under the terms of the North Atlantic (Washington) Treaty's Article 4, which allows any member state to call on the entire alliance to respond to alleged threats to its territorial integrity and security.

On June 25, three days after a Turkish F-14 supersonic fighter-bomber was shot down over Syrian waters, Turkey announced that it was going to ask the military alliance to discuss its Article 5, which states that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" and commits NATO allies to "assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force..."

Article 5 was invoked for the first and to date only time in October 2001 and is the basis for the deployment of troops from 28 NATO and 22 partner states to Afghanistan over the past decade.

Article 4 was first invoked on February 16, 2003, again by the North Atlantic Council and again in relation to Turkey, on the eve of the U.S. and British invasion of Iraq. So-called Operation Display Deterrence was launched as a result and five Patriot interceptor missile batteries, three Dutch and two American, and four Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) surveillance aircraft were deployed to Turkey in conjunction with NATO's Integrated and Extended Air Defence System.

NATO, in its own words, deployed "1000 technically advanced and highly capable forces" to run the operation.

The first AWACS aircraft arrived on February 26 and three weeks later the bombardment and invasion of Iraq began. Although Iraq at the time had a population of approximately 25 million and Turkey 70 million, and although Turkey had one of the most formidable militaries

in the region while Iraq's had been weakened by the eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s, the U.S. and allied bombing campaign of 1991 and in the interim, and twelve years of crushing sanctions, NATO afterward praised Operation Display Deterrence as having "tested and proved the success of NATO's military to respond immediately and with appropriate defensive force to a rapidly developing threat against a member of the Alliance."

In what manner a fatally debilitated Iraq had presented Turkey with "a rapidly developing threat" was never specified.

The AWACS flew 100 missions and the Dutch Patriot batteries included Patriot Advanced Capability-2 missiles and "a more modern missile provided by Germany," according to NATO.

The operation was concluded on May 3, 65 days after it began and 45 days after the invasion of Iraq. To provide an indication of what NATO will claim after its meeting on Syria, the then-Turkish ambassador to the bloc stated after the invoking of Article 4:

"I convey once again the most sincere gratitude of the Turkish people and Government for the Alliance solidarity shown in reinforcing the defence of my country in response to the latest crisis in Iraq. We are convinced that, through such an active and collective display of deterrence, NATO has not only extended a much-appreciated helping hand to one of its members in her hour of need, but also proven, once again, its credibility and relevance as the cornerstone of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic area".

Turkey was then, as it is now, portrayed as the victim – in its "hour of need" moreover – and besieged and soon to be devastated Iraq as the aggressor.

Syria's population now is much the same as Iraq's was then and Turkey is now a nation almost three times as large. Syria is isolated and its military forces are small compared to its neighbor Turkey's. The latter can count on the support of 27 allies, including most of the world's major military powers. The U.S. has an estimated 90 B61 tactical nuclear weapons stationed at the Incirlik Air Base 35 miles from Turkey's Mediterranean coast.

Activating the Article 5 mutual military assistance – in effect war – clause has been mentioned by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at least twice since April, on the first occasion over two months before the downing of the Turkish warplane last week.

On June 25 Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc announced that his nation "has made necessary applications with NATO regarding Article 4 and Article 5."

According to the Associated Press, he added:

"It should be known that within legality we will of course use all rights granted under international law until the end. This also includes self-defense. This also includes retaliation many-fold. This includes all sanctions that can be applied to the aggressor state under international law. Turkey will not leave anything out on this issue..."

The U.S. and NATO have been itching for a pretext to attack Syria, and Turkey, the only NATO member to border the country, has always been the pretext which would be employed to justify military action against the Arab nation.

Last Friday's incident and the NATO meeting following it signal the fourth act in a tragedy

that the world community has precious little time to stop.

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