



NATO and Russia Enhancing Security Through Partnership

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As NATO prepares for its June 28-29 Summit Meeting in Istanbul, the Alliance and the Russian Federation will this week take a little-noticed but enormous step in our maturing partnership. Exercise Kaliningrad 2004 will bring together some 1,000 personnel from 22 NATO member and partner countries for a terrorism response exercise. The second such exercise Russia has hosted with NATO since 2002, Kaliningrad 2004 simulates an attack producing mass casualties and triggering an environmental disaster. It will test current international readiness to respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack, and identify areas where NATO and Russia need to develop better civil emergency cooperation for rescuing the stricken, coordinating relief, and managing the consequences of a terrorist attack or disaster.

Former Cold War adversaries NATO and Russia changed the course of their relationship in 1997 by signing the Founding Act, which launched us on an amicable course of partnership. The NATO-Russia Council, created at the Rome summit in May 2002, has transformed both the mathematics and the chemistry of our relationship. In the NRC, Russia's voice counts as one of twenty-seven countries at the table. Decisions are taken by consensus in the same spirit of consultation that characterizes all of NATO's deliberations. Since 2002, NATO and Russia have embarked on an ambitious agenda that encompasses counter-terrorism, joint military-to-military activities, and theatre missile defense.

President Bush and President Putin were among the first world leaders to recognize that terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction threaten all civilized countries. Recent terrorist incidents in Istanbul, Madrid, Moscow, Uzbekistan and elsewhere remind us that global terrorism poses a threat to NATO Allies and Partner countries alike.

Our common fight against terrorism tops the agenda of the NATO-Russia Council, and Russia is one of NATO's most important partners in this endeavor. Already our Council has completed three joint threat assessments -- of the Al-Qaeda network, the vulnerabilities of civilian aircraft, and the influence of Islamic extremist groups in Central Asia. Following a discussion of national counter-terrorism strategies, NATO and Russia have identified gaps in our legal defenses against terrorism.

Military-to-military cooperation in the NATO-Russia Council over the past two years has been impressive. Through the NATO-Russia military-to-military interoperability program, we are working to ensure that NATO and Russian forces will be prepared to meet future challenges together. NATO and Russia have recently agreed to enhance the NATO military liaison mission in Moscow and create a permanent Russian mission at NATO's military headquarters. Our military authorities have discussed the most effective doctrines for defense against terrorism, and we are planning to establish a fellowship at the NATO Defense College in Rome for research on the differences in national concepts and military doctrines in member states of the NATO-Russia Council.

In addition to civil emergency preparedness exercises and military-to-military activities, NATO and Russia also are engaged in a number of other areas of practical cooperation. We are studying the merits of a theater missile defense system, and 10 countries recently held an exercise in Colorado to test procedures for responding to missile threats.

Finally, the NATO-Russia Council provides tremendous political value. It is a serious forum for conceptual work on peacekeeping and discussion of defense reform. We have also engaged in strategic political and security discussions on topical issues such as Afghanistan, the Balkans and Georgia.

The most remarkable aspect of the current NATO-Russia relationship is the breadth of our cooperation and the number of our common projects. However, there is more that we can do together, especially militarily. Despite the progress made, Russian and NATO forces are not yet sufficiently interoperable. Our militaries should exercise together more often. For those exercises to occur on Russian soil, Russia needs to conclude an agreement that provides legal protections for our troops -- the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement. We are confident of completing this agreement by the end of the year. We could also hold more joint NATO-Russia field exercises, especially counter-terrorism field training. In addition, we need to make joint NATO-Russia peacekeeping a reality. We hope that Moscow will take another look at creating a NATO-interoperable peacekeeping brigade, which would be a major step forward in this regard.

For the past two years, we have discussed the need to build mutual confidence among our respective naval forces. In February of 2003, we signed a Framework Document on cooperation in Search and Rescue at Sea. However, NATO also has a vigorous maritime interdiction operation -- known as Active Endeavor -- underway in the Mediterranean to protect shipping lanes from possible acts of terrorism. We expect that, at the Istanbul Summit, NATO will invite Russia to join with the Alliance in Operation Active Endeavor.

At Istanbul, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Secretary of State Powell, and the other 25 NATO Foreign Ministers will meet together in the NATO-Russia Council. Despite Russia's concerns about NATO enlargement, we see that Russian attitudes toward the Alliance have grown more positive as a result of engagement in the NRC. Russia has said that it does not intend to join NATO, but its participation in the NRC and its partnership with the Alliance extends security across virtually three continents. This constructive new relationship between former enemies eases decades of suspicion and mistrust between NATO and Russia, and leaves our countries more secure today than at any time in the last half-century.

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