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NATO 75th Anniversary Special Report



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BORN READY.

INTRODUCTION

Russia Threat Has NATO Returning to Its Roots **BY JOSH LUCKENBAUGH**

BRUSSELS — The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in April 1949 by 12 countries, states that member nations “are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security” and “agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.”

Seventy-five years later, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — now consisting of 32 countries — is reemphasizing its commitment to collective defense as it faces an increasingly complex security environment, with Russia continuing its war in Ukraine near the alliance’s eastern border and the rise of China as a strategic competitor.

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Matthew Van Wagenen, deputy chief of staff for operations at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, said NATO’s strategic environment “shifted dramatically” when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

The invasion “accelerated” NATO’s shift “back into collective defense after 35 years,” including the introduction of a new family of defense plans agreed upon at the 2023 NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, Van Wagenen said in an interview.

“For 35 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO got out of collective defense and got involved in crisis management and out-of-area operations,” including missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq, he said. The organization is now entering “a new era ... as we usher in the first collective defense plans of the alliance since 1989.”

Rachel Ellehuus, the U.S. secretary of defense’s representative in Europe and the defense advisor for the U.S. Mission to NATO, said the alliance’s return to collective defense includes a “new family of regional plans” that rely “more on in-place host nation forces” and take “advantage of the geography of each specific region.”

The hope is that NATO asking countries “to do things that they would need to do for national or regional defense anyway” will be a “powerful driver for

allies” to meet the alliance’s goal of all members spending at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024, Ellehuus said in an interview. Two-thirds of the alliance will meet or exceed the 2 percent GDP mark this year, compared to only three nations in 2014 when that goal was agreed to, according to NATO.

The alliance’s 2 percent goal became a hot topic earlier this year when former President Donald Trump said that if reelected he would not protect NATO members that aren’t meeting the threshold.

Rick Holtzapple, deputy chief of mission for the U.S. Mission to NATO, said that while he wouldn’t comment specifically on Trump’s remarks, “the broad picture is that we are making progress on it, and even those allies that haven’t hit the target of 2 percent in 2024 ... have increased their spending — basically all of them across the board. ... Virtually all of those who haven’t [met the target] have credible plans to do so.”

And not only is it important for all allies to meet that 2 percent goal, but that money must be spent wisely, Holtzapple said in an interview.

“Two percent can be spent well or spent poorly, and we need 2 percent that’s spent well,” he said. “What we really need is not everybody spending 2 percent, what we really need is allies able to acquire and sustain and deploy the capabilities they would be asked to provide under our plans.”

Ellehuus said the U.S. Mission to NATO regularly monitors “how well each ally is doing on cash, capabilities and contributions. ... And based on that mix, you can align your message and figure out where you need to push them.”

“I wouldn’t recommend any ... punitive measure for making countries meet the 2 percent because these are national decisions — they’re not even decisions that are held solely by [an ally’s] minister of defense — but what I have seen that works is being very concrete with allies’ leadership about why 2 percent is needed and building the case,” she said.

“And there has been no better case to be made than watching Ukraine

and the rate at which they have had to expend [ammunition], the challenges they’ve met with regard to air defense and continually adapting that air defense as Russia has also learned how to ... plan and prosecute these attacks,” she said.

The war in Ukraine is also showing “how long it takes to build capability, that if this is something that they need now, it’s still going to take five to 10 years to reconstitute and build that capability,” she added.

NATO also can’t “underestimate the value of” peer pressure to get “countries to fall into line” and meet the 2 percent threshold, and the United States has an outsized role in leading the way, she said.

“NATO is an alliance of 32 countries, but things get done when the United States stands up, shows leadership, moves out on our own — whether providing funding or troops or capabilities or political leadership — then others tend to follow,” she said. “Absent that U.S. leadership, things don’t tend to happen.”

Alexander Vershbow, Atlantic Council distinguished fellow and former NATO deputy secretary general, said that while it was good to see some



European allies step up “in ways we hadn’t seen before” to provide Ukraine assistance when the national security supplemental was stalled in the U.S. Congress, there needs to be a “new paradigm in which the European members of the alliance ... aspire to contribute 50 percent of the minimum capabilities required for collective defense and take up the role of being the first responders to crises in Europe’s neighborhood.

“This would be not only a question of equity with respect to the balance of responsibility with the United States; it would also be, I think, a practical necessity given that we all recognize the possibility that U.S. forces may be drawn into an Asia-Pacific contingency, and the European forces would need to pick up the slack,” Vershbow said during a Council on Foreign Relations event in April.

“Moving to a new paradigm in which” there is “enhanced European strategic responsibility would go hand in hand with accommodating the continued global responsibilities shouldered by the United States,” he added.

Matthias Matthijs, senior fellow for Europe at the Council on Foreign Relations, said while the status quo of the United States “providing the lion’s share” of military capabilities for its European allies is “no longer sustainable,” getting European nations to take on more responsibility — for which “there is clear American support” — will be difficult.

The European Union released its first-ever defense industrial strategy in March, which called for EU countries to spend at least half of their procurement budgets on products made in Europe by 2030. Since 2022, 76 percent of EU weapons acquisition has come from outside of the organization, and 63 percent of that was from the United States, Matthijs said during the Council on Foreign Relations event.

Despite the EU’s new industrial strategy, Matthijs said he is concerned that European countries have become so reliant on the U.S. industrial base that neither side will show the necessary initiative to “allow Europe to develop its own industry.”

One example of this is Germany, which in 2022 approved a 100 billion euro special defense fund to be spent over the next five years. However, “there’s frustration in the rest of Europe with the lack of coordination in what Germany is doing with this money,” one particular disappointment being “that a lot of this money was being used to buy American fighter jets ... rather than develop a European industry,” Matthijs said.

“Germany still” has “this sort of small country, open economy mentality where they think whatever they do in Germany’s interest doesn’t have any repercussions for the rest of Europe — and obviously it does” have ramifications for other allies, he said.

Additionally, the rising threat of China is not just a U.S. or Indo-

Pacific matter but rather something NATO as a whole must account for as well, Holtzapple said.

In the past, the United States “faced some reluctance from a few allies about, well, is NATO — a Euro-Atlantic security institution — really supposed to be worrying about China in the Indo-Pacific?” he said. “And we were making — and we have ... successfully made — the argument that ... China’s activities in cyberspace and outer space and the maritime domain and in some of our supply chains, our transportation networks and elsewhere, pose real, concrete security challenges, if not even threats, to Euro-Atlantic security, irrespective of what might be going on in the Indo-Pacific.”

While NATO is not “opening up an Indo-Pacific branch,” the alliance is “thickening” its relationship with partner nations in the region such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, he added.

Partnerships beyond the Euro-Atlantic are not “about expanding NATO’s geographic scope,” he said. “It is about finding ways to cooperate with partners who have both benefits to gain from working with us and things to offer for our own security in terms of working with us.”

Potential adversaries are also forming global partnerships, Holtzapple said, noting how China has “really, really cozied up to Russia.” People’s Republic of China President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks in China in May, releasing a joint statement saying the two countries had entered a “new era” of “comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction.”

“You’re starting to see now an axis” of potential adversaries with “the Russians working with the North Koreans, the Chinese, the Iranians,” Van Wagenen said.

“It’s a challenging security environment, but it’s a security environment” in which “NATO clearly knows what it has to do” — which is what it’s been doing “for the last 75 years” — not only defend its members but “deter anybody from going to war with the alliance,” he said.

“What we’ve got to do is make anybody out there ... know that the cost calculus would be too high to ever go fight the alliance or try to take any kind of NATO territory, and that’s what we’re focused on right now,” he said. **ND**

NATO photo



ALLIED INNOVATION

NATO Going Commercial to Develop New Tech **BY JOSH LUCKENBAUGH**

BRUSSELS — The war in Ukraine has showcased the many ways commercial technology can impact the modern battlefield, and that's one of the reasons NATO is expanding how it partners with both traditional and nontraditional defense companies.

Arguably the “most significant change” the organization has made in recent years is “the amount of time and effort we have spent working with the defense industrial base,” said Rachel Ellehuus, the U.S. secretary of defense’s representative in Europe and the defense advisor for the U.S. Mission to NATO.

With the alliance’s focus on out-of-area operations in previous decades, the defense industries of member nations are “producing things just in time, there are low stockpiles in national inventories, there’s very little excess capacity to boost demand in an emergency scenario,” Ellehuus said in an interview.

But with NATO now reprioritizing collective defense following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the alliance is working with its industrial base to reverse those trends and “reinforce its deterrence and defense capabilities to prepare for an Article Five scenario,” in which an armed attack on one member is considered an attack on all members, she said.

At the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2023, the alliance initiated a new “Defense Production Action Plan” with several lines of effort, including increasing industrial capacity across the member countries and encouraging multiyear, multinational procurement contracts that help aggregate demand and “get at some of these supply issues in a more efficient way,” she said.

The plan is also designed to foster better standardization and interoperability, she added. “Are we really doing enough to implement the standards NATO has on the books, and is interoperability where we can just kind of operate alongside our allies in a coherent way, [or] do we have to go a step further where we’re really creating platforms and weap-

ons that are interchangeable with one another in the way the Ukrainians have shown us [can be] done?”

Along with the traditional defense industrial base, NATO is looking to bring in nontraditional partners to increase the speed of innovation across the organization.

David van Weel, NATO’s assistant secretary general for innovation, hybrid and cyber, said one of the key lessons from the war in Ukraine is “we need that classical defense equipment — and we need a lot of it” — but “at the same time, we need to be very agile in innovation and bringing in new technology at speed. Even if they’re not perfect ... they can, temporarily, make a big difference.”

In 2022, NATO established the Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic, or DIANA, which is modeled after the U.S. Defense Department’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. It also recently established an office near Helsinki, Finland.

DIANA Chief Operating Officer Jyoti Hirani-Driver said the goal of the accelerator is to bring together “the best and brightest innovators out there with the most cutting-edge technology” and to “harness it, develop it and adopt it at some stage so that we are outpacing our adversaries.”

DIANA provides innovators with networking and learning opportunities to better navigate the defense market that otherwise can be quite “tricky” for inexperienced companies, Hirani-Driver said in an interview. DIANA is looking for dual-use technologies with both civil and military applications, “given most innovators are likely to be attracted to the civilian market.”

“For companies today, it’s all about, ‘Am I going to make revenue, and I need to make it quickly or my business just doesn’t last,’” she said. “So, we’re trying to get people who are innovators who wouldn’t normally think to work with defense” to participate in DIANA.

DIANA began its first challenge program in June 2023, seeking proposals in three focus areas: energy resilience, secure information sharing and sensing and surveillance.

The program selected 44 companies, and in January they began an “in-depth learning curriculum” on how to manage their business and navigate the defense industry, she said.

The chosen companies also have access to DIANA’s network of 23 accelerator sites and 182 test centers “where an innovator can go to test their innovation, to get the validation, ... to experiment and understand will it actually work in the environment that it’s going to be used for?” she said.

The initial curriculum wrapped up in June, and as of press time DIANA was in the process of downselecting around nine companies to participate in the next phase of the program called “Grow,” which “will be much more bespoke and much more focused on defense and security adoption and commercialization,” Hirani-Driver said.

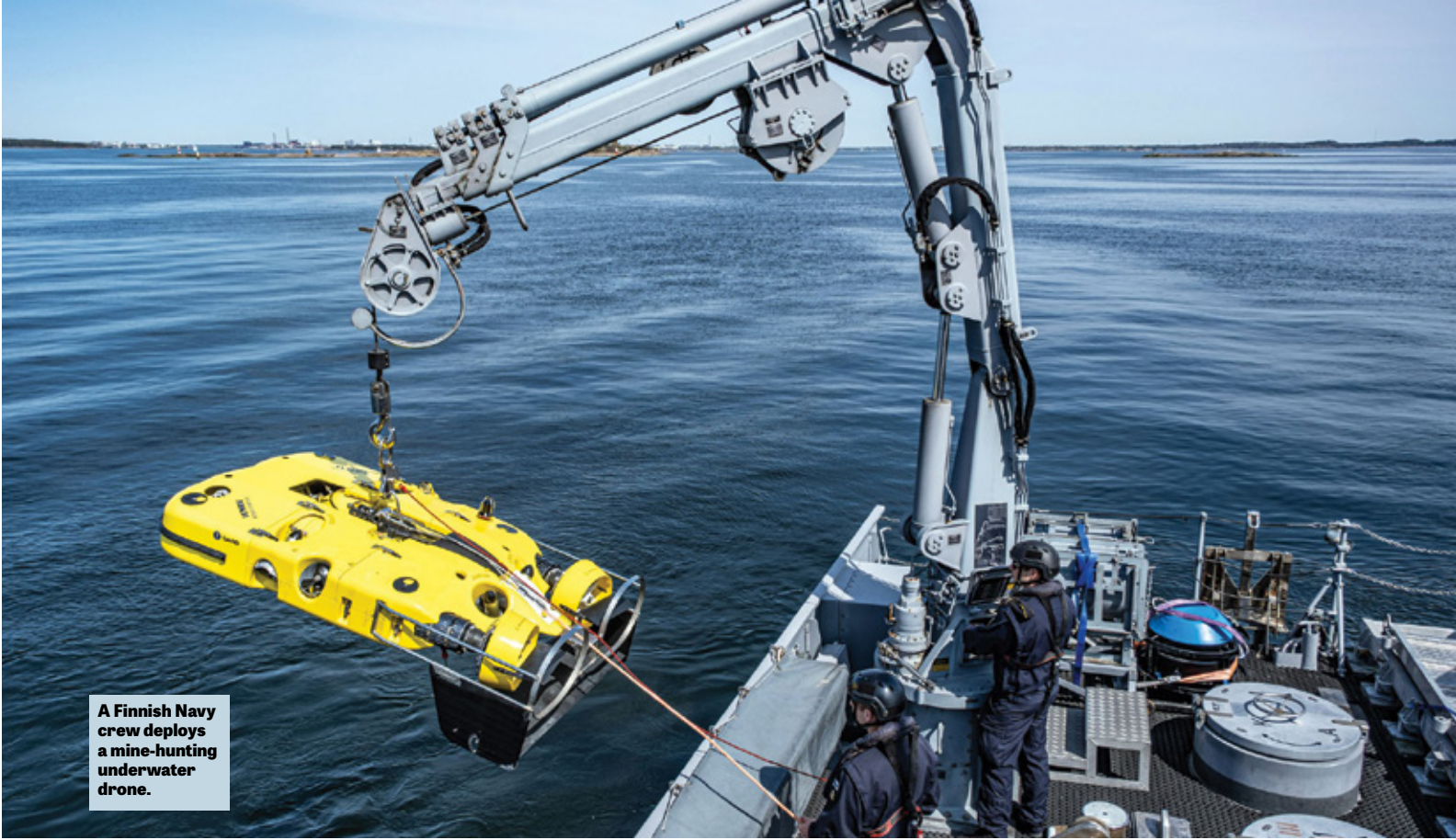
“We’ll be working really closely with investors, with industry partners — and this is where we really need their help and expertise — to really guide these innovators and hopefully scale them up” and “give them the chance to survive and scale their innovation,” she said.

Van Weel said DIANA is “meant to actually go out there where the innovators are and make them enthusiastic for the problems that we’re trying to solve. But then, as these companies are successful and they have things that can really help us, then what they need is money to be able to scale and really build it into a solid product.” That is where the alliance’s other new initiative, the NATO Innovation Fund, can help.

Historically — and particularly in Europe — “there’s not that much private or venture capital that was willing to invest in dual-use applications,” Van Weel said. Launched in 2022, the NATO Innovation Fund “invests in deep tech-driven enterprises that can strengthen our nations’ collective security and prosperity,” a fund press release stated.

Twenty-four of the 32 NATO allies have backed the fund, including the newest member of the alliance Sweden.

It has “a solid amount of money



A Finnish Navy crew deploys a mine-hunting underwater drone.

behind it: 1 billion euros,” Van Weel said. It also has what he described as an “umbrella fund construction, so we can hang up more sub-funds as more nations want to come in, or partner nations or maybe private companies at some point in time.”

The United States and Canada are among the eight allies not participating, the main reason being “to avoid duplication with existing national innovation efforts,” according to a Carnegie Europe article written by Raquel Jorge Ricart, a policy analyst at Spain’s Elcano Royal Institute.

However, “Canada ... announced in a recent defense bill that they want to join the NIF,” Van Weel said. “It would be great if the [United States] would also join because then you would have a North American sub-fund to go around.”

“I think for some countries it’s always easier to see something that’s already up and running and think, ‘OK, well, great. This works, so let me be part of it,’” rather than join the fund initially, he said.

However, NATO’s new initiatives will only succeed if member nations participate in these new processes and invest in the technologies, Ellehuus and Van Weel said.

“One of the challenges with aggregating demand and implementing the vision that’s laid out in the Defense

Production Action Plan is that it’s not NATO that owns these processes; it’s individual countries,” Ellehuus said. “So whereas NATO can be a vehicle and a mechanism by which we aggregate demand and drive standardization and drive interchangeability, if the nations aren’t part of that equation and moving in the same direction, we won’t make much progress.”

Similarly for innovation programs such as DIANA, “at the end of the pipeline, NATO doesn’t have the money to buy this stuff, and so we will be reliant on nations to actually write the contracts for these companies,” Van Weel said. “Otherwise, if that doesn’t happen, the initiative will dry up at some point in time because ... these innovators want to make money and build their companies. So, I think we still have some work to do in adapting our procurement procedures to such a rapid cycle.”

DIANA is also looking to expand its number of challenges from three to five next year and by 2025 intends to run up to 10 challenges per year, which will require growing the organization and increasing its funding, Hirani-Driver said.

“What I’m really encouraged with is we’re in NATO, which is ... traditionally not seen as the beast that moves at the pace of relevance,” she said. “But I think what I’m really heartened to

see is actually NATO is taking risks — and setting up DIANA is a risk. So, I think continuing that risk appetite is going to be really, really important.”

Ellehuus said she feels a “new momentum” growing across the alliance for greater collaboration with industry and implementing new processes such as the Defense Production Action Plan.

Similar to how AUKUS — the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to provide Australia nuclear-powered submarines and collaborate on emerging technologies — has seen the U.S. Congress ease some of the “retransfer and export control regulations within a smaller group of allies and partners, I would like to see some of that transferred to NATO,” Ellehuus said. “Because I do think we have a lot of trust among allies that with a little bit of easing of some of the traditional obstacles to aggregating demand and retransfer, we could really make some progress there.”

Initiatives like DIANA and the NATO Innovation Fund “can ensure that even as we’re still getting collective defense right” in the present, “we’re investing in the capabilities of the future” and thinking about “how these types of capabilities can really help amplify what is a very traditional defensive alliance,” she said. **ND**

EXPANDING FAMILY

Russia, China Threats Boosting NATO Members, Partnerships **BY LAURA HECKMANN**

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Red blotches sunk into the pavement along the sidewalks of Sarajevo could be mistaken for an urban art project, scattered about the city in seemingly random places. But the red resin-filled indentations in the concrete mark a far more sobering reality: gashes left from mortar fire.

The memorials — called Sarajevo roses — are some of many scars left from a war that ended during the lifetime of many who still inhabit the city. Today, a thriving old town district lined with cobblestones, a serene riverwalk and quaint houses stacked up hillsides mask the not-so-distant history of violence while simultaneously serving as a testament to a lesser-known relationship of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: its partners.

Bosnia and Herzegovina — a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program since 2006 — was host to the alliance's annual Military Strategic Partnership Conference in April — a forum aimed at furthering NATO processes and programs for nonmembers. Since the release of NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept — finalized after Russia invaded Ukraine — NATO has placed greater emphasis on working with sympathetic nations in regions like Eastern Europe or the Indo-Pacific where threats to the alliance's interests are growing.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of more than 35 partner nations — ranging from Colombia to Mongolia — joining NATO's 32 members to form what Norwegian navy Rear Adm. Gunnstein Bruåsdal, deputy chief of staff for Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe's Partnerships Directorate, called the NATO family. Together, NATO allies and partners account for about 2 billion people, he said, or one-quarter of the world's population.

The Partnership for Peace program — celebrating 30 years alongside NATO's 75th anniversary this year — is one of four frameworks within the organization, along with the Mediterranean Dialogue,

the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and partners across the globe.

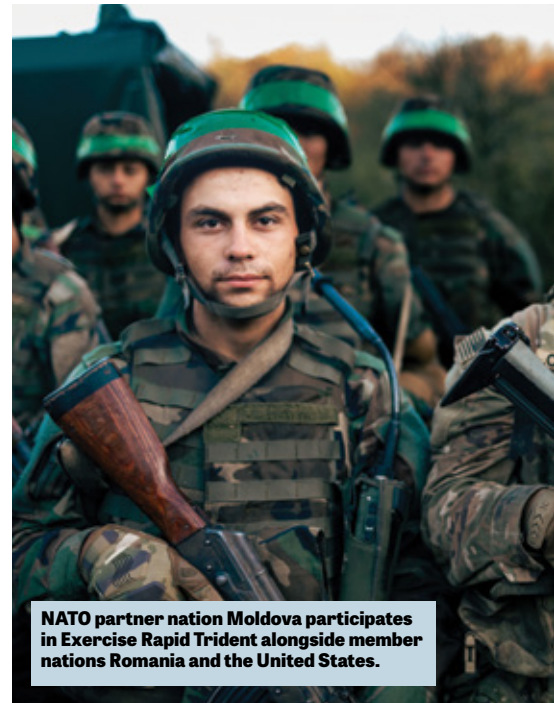
The program was launched in 1994 and the first formal structure for partners to work with NATO, emerging from a pledge at the 1990 London Summit that the organization would “extend the hand of friendship” to its former adversaries in the Cold War, according to the NATO website. Russia was the first member of the Partnership for Peace program, but members suspended partnership with Russia after it invaded Ukraine in 2014. Soon after the launch of the Partnership for Peace, NATO formed structures focused on the wider Mediterranean and Middle East regions with the Mediterranean and Istanbul frameworks.

Becoming a partner is open to “any nation wishing to share in its core values,” Bruåsdal said — an open door policy anchored in Article 10 of its founding treaty. While some enter into the partnership with the goal of membership, many do not. “Not even close,” Bruåsdal said during an interview at the conference.

NATO “really respects” partner nations' authority when defining their involvement, he said. “That is the beauty of partnerships. It's up to the partner nations what they will do.” Mechanisms vary within each partnership structure, but each nation works with NATO to define its own ambitions and jointly develop an agreement.

Once objectives are established, partners gain access to certain of the organization's processes, procedures and structures normally reserved for members, to include a Partnership Cooperation Menu of approximately 1,400 activities, according to the NATO website.

Daniel Fried, Weiser Family distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council and former U.S. ambassador to Poland, said in an interview that partnership means “a basis to engage in military and security cooperation,” giving these nations' militaries access to and liaison ability with NATO and in turn giving it the ability to extend its security



NATO partner nation Moldova participates in Exercise Rapid Trident alongside member nations Romania and the United States.

cooperation with the free world.

Partnerships “knit together the free world's countries in an era where you have rising cooperation of autocracies,” Fried said. Partnerships are friendships, “which is what you need in a world where the Russians and Iranians are pushing and North Koreans are pushing. ... NATO is not under an obligation to defend South Korea against China, but it means that we're all working together and consulting about the common security challenges we face.”

Just as NATO is under no obligation to defend South Korea against China, the alliance has no obligation to defend partner Ukraine from Russia's unprovoked invasion. Ukraine's history and partnership with NATO, however, has made support easier because “it was easier to understand tactics and procedures,” Bruåsdal noted.

Since 9/11, NATO has had extensive practice in integrating tactics and procedures with partners. From 2015 to 2021, nearly one-third of the 40 some countries supporting the NATO-led Operation Resolute Support — a mission in Afghanistan — were partner nations.

Today, threats have evolved since Afghanistan, and just as NATO has transformed to meet them, it has also reshaped how it cooperates with its partners. “As we face

new challenges, we must adapt and develop new ways of working cooperatively together,” Bruåsdaal said.



One effort the alliance hopes will maximize partner involvement is a new framework called the Partners Augmentation Forces to NATO, announced at the conference. The new framework will create a pool of partner nation forces that can contribute to alliance members without being restricted by the organization’s requirements.

Canadian Army Lt. Col. Darcy Wright, SO1 in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe’s

Partnerships Directorate, said the process will not require a specific commitment from partner nations, so it offers “a lot of flexibility.” Unlike NATO’s force model, where speed is a factor, partners “don’t have to commit to say, ‘My forces can be there in 30 days.’ It is an overall commitment in which partners can contribute across the spectrum of our force generation.”

The model allows partners to highlight their strengths, which is a benefit to NATO as well, Wright said. It will also allow partners that have passed a military assessment that includes NATO interoperability to participate in exercises not previously accessible to them.

Slovakian Air Force Brig. Gen. Martin Remes, assistant chief of staff for military cooperation in Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe’s Partnerships Directorate, said what the NATO family ultimately offers is a “mass of people” that can help each other protect the same values, “our common grounds we believe in.”

Perhaps nowhere today is that more evident than in the Indo-Pacific, where China has grown increasingly aggressive in claiming territory and threatening to retake Taiwan, making NATO partnership in the region more important.

New Zealand is one of four partner nations in the region, along with

Australia, Japan and South Korea.

Royal New Zealand Navy Capt. James Barnes, defence attache to Belgium and France, said during an interview that NATO is waking up to the fact that “the whole world is linked. So, they talk to nations in the Pacific, because what happens in the Pacific is relevant, even if it’s not directly relevant today. So, it’s just linkages more than anything else.”

Bruåsdaal said NATO’s interest in the Indo-Pacific should be “quite obvious. If you do something in the Suez Canal, Panama Canal, Strait of Malacca, Strait of Taiwan, you have a problem. Things happening in the Indo-Pacific will influence [the United States] and Europe whether we like it or not.”

NATO is rolling out a new framework for its partnership agreements, and New Zealand is finalizing its new pact. Called Individually Tailored Partnership Programs, the new agreements will gradually replace the current Individual Partnership Action Plans as a more tailored bilateral framework between NATO and individual partner countries.

New Zealand’s transition to the new agreement was driven by the simple fact that it was due to be renewed anyway. The old agreements have a shelf life for the same reason the new ones are more customized: things change.

Barnes said what NATO wanted to do with the new partnership program is tailor its engagements with partner nations in the same way one would speak differently to different people. “And they tried to do that as a baseline, because every partner has different needs.”

New Zealand is a “very different country” than Australia, he said, which is very different from Moldova or Ireland. “So, it makes sense.” It’s a logical progression of NATO policy “to create this as an individual thing,” he said.

The content of the new agreements is somewhat broad, Barnes said — a “high-level policy document” drafted by the partner and NATO.

He said nothing earth-shattering will be found in New Zealand’s new agreement, but it’s fundamentally a document that “just gives [partner nations] the ability to access things that are relevant to them.”

Roy Blewett, assistant director of strategic engagement for the New Zealand Defence Force, said the foundation of the new agreement is a “common understanding of what those threats are and how they’re evolving”

and “[working] together in order to try and tackle them in the best way possible, because there’s no point in us trying to deal with the issue, a global issue, in one way, and everybody else trying to deal with it another way.”

Still, membership clearly has its privileges as the alliance’s most potent deterrent and response mechanism — Article 5 — is unavailable to partners. Article 5 states “an attack on one is an attack on all” members, Fried said. “It makes a world of difference.”

What Bruåsdaal called the “strategic shock” of Russia invading Ukraine has pushed some partners — most recently Finland and Sweden — toward membership, realizing “we can’t do this alone.”

Whether or not the war will prompt other nations to follow has much to do with their political climates, Fried said, with many hampered by Russia’s hold in the region and their own political uncertainty.

Georgia, for example, “is now having a fight internally about whether it wants to continue to integrate into Europe and join European institutions, or whether under the current government it’s going to revert back to a kind of authoritarian isolationism or partnership with Russia,” he said.

For many partner nations — regardless of desire — a NATO membership is not in the cards, he said. “Though it is for a few.”

Moldova could be one, he speculated, with a current government that “might well favor it” but is dealing with political pressure from upcoming elections. He also noted that bringing Moldova in before Ukraine would “be difficult.” Ukrainian NATO membership is “a whole [other] world,” he said, with NATO leaders having said formally that Ukraine has a future in the alliance.

Bruåsdaal said since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, there has been a “quite obvious” growing cohesion within NATO, along with a sense of increased interest from partner nations.

“Because at the end of the day ... this is [NATO’s] core values versus other types of values. ... So at some point, nations either lean in this way or that way,” he said. “But we have partners which [are] in the middle of this and they lean both ways, which is fine. But we cannot close the door. So, we will stimulate and motivate them, but we will not enforce. We need to stimulate ... the nations to decide where they want to go, how they want to go.” **ND**

NATO Ready for Battle, but Lacks Stamina, Report Finds

BY SEAN CARBERRY AND LAURA HECKMANN

Since NATO's adoption of a "back to the future" strategy at its Madrid Summit two years ago on the heels of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the alliance has made significant strides toward forward defense and deterrence, and a recent report said the alliance is prepared for war — as long as it's short.

The report, "Is NATO Ready for War?" launched June 11 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, found the alliance has made "substantial progress" since 2022 on defense spending, forward defense, high-readiness forces, command and control, collective defense exercises and the integration of Sweden and Finland.

Sean Monaghan, visiting fellow in the Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program at CSIS and co-author of the report, said during a report launch event that "NATO is ready to fight tonight, as it were, in a way that it hasn't been in the last two years. But NATO's maybe not ready for a protracted war."

Any "serious conflict" between NATO and Russia would likely be a protracted war, he said. "We've seen protracted war in Ukraine as we speak. We know what that looks like. NATO still has a lot of work to do on that front."

The report said a long-term conflict would inevitably expose gaps that will require allies "to spend more, boost industrial capacity, address critical capability gaps and bolster resilience."

Many areas where the report found progress it also found shortcomings. Defense spending, for example, has fueled questions about burden sharing and ally contributions. In 2014, NATO heads of state and government agreed to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. Many are, the report found, noting that allies on average are spending the 2 percent goal. "So, in a way, the burden sharing questions can be put to bed," Monaghan said. But still, "the 2 percent target probably isn't enough."

NATO has also moved toward a new force model since the Madrid Summit, replacing its NATO Response Force with a three-tiered force

structure aimed at boosting deterrence and defense by providing a "much larger pool of forces available to deploy quickly," the report said.

Each tier holds forces of graduated readiness, but challenges remain to the model's goal of boosting its 40,000 deployed troops in 2022 to 300,000 — "a massive increase on the previous target," Monaghan said.

He said judging the goal's success is "difficult," noting that NATO officials have claimed the goal is met, "but at the same time, the chief of the military committee ... has said there are some challenges on readiness."

John Deni, research professor of joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational security studies at the Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, said during the event that the report "really does a good job of ... examining whether and how those tiers are really all they're cracked up to be."

For example, he said, NATO has "most of" tier 1 covered because it's made up of in-place forces such as Poland. As the forces grow with tiers 2 and 3, they get heavier in composition, he said, "and here the allies continue to struggle."

The larger the force, the more niche capabilities are sacrificed, he said. "Some of the niche capabilities probably won't be there in the numbers they need to be." These gaps won't prevent the alliance from declaring that force combat credible, he said, "but that means if it's combat credible, and it still lacks some niche capabilities, they're taking on increased risk."

Deni also expressed concern about NATO's ability to meet timelines and doubts surrounding its ability to "apply its yardstick" with "rigor," such as snap exercises and no-notice inspections.

Another area of varying progress the report examined is the defense industrial base.

Cynthia Cook, director of the Defense-Industrial Initiatives Group and senior fellow with the International Security Program at CSIS, said analysis of the defense industrial base revealed both good and bad news.

"The good news is that policymakers are finally giving the defense industrial base the attention it deserves,"

Cook said. "The bad news is the reason for this, which is the difficulty in supporting Ukraine and its defense against Russia's illegal invasion." Support to Ukraine revealed challenges in production capacity and the ability to surge production, she said.

Now a well-understood problem, she referenced NATO's Defense Production Action Plan unveiled at the Vilnius Summit last year, which called for the removal of barriers to defense trade and investments in the resiliency of the defense industrial base.

"So, there has been some progress in terms of what industry looks for," Cook said, noting investments since 2023, such as contracts issued for munitions and the procurement of Patriot missiles and artillery shells through the NATO Support and Procurement Agency. She also stressed a continued need to focus on resilience and defense capability gaps.

But changes to the defense industrial base "do take time," and heritage systems and production methods constrain timely progress, she said.

While the addition of Sweden and Finland as members has further bolstered NATO's readiness, the organization's ongoing support of Ukraine presents competing demand signals for allies.

"There's not only the competing demand signal of Ukraine, with what NATO is asking these countries to do now for the new operations plans that have been approved, but there's also national defense responsibilities," Deni said.

How much each country can dip down into its stocks before it has hit "too great a risk" is a judgment call, he said. "There are exceptions, but many of them have reached the bottom of their ability to give more."

Assessing NATO's readiness against both Russia and a looming threat from China will be "at the top of the agenda" at the summit in Washington, D.C. next month, as well as support to Ukraine and the trade-offs necessary to strengthen defense and deterrence, panelists said.

NATO may be ready to "fight tonight," but a closer look at long-term consequences "becomes a competition in resilience and preparedness, industrial capacity and supply chains," the report said.

However, Supreme Allied Commander Europe U.S. Army Gen. Christopher Cavoli said during the NATO Public Forum in Washing-

ton, D.C., in July that the organization was ready to take on Russia.

NATO — no longer enmeshed in conflicts like Afghanistan — has reoriented its plans and force generation to deterring Russia, and if deterrence fails, the alliance has the plans and forces in place for high-intensity conflict with Russia, the commander of the organization said.

“We have been building out a strategic concept and then the enablement of that strategic concept for the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area,”

“What we’ve done is turn those into concrete plans — traditional, classical operational plans — that describe how we’re going to defend specific areas of the alliance and what we’re going to use to do it and what the sequence of events is. This is a big, big shift,” he said. “The alliance had gone for many years without plans — since the end of the Cold War — real, significant plans to defend the territory [and] the alliance.”

Coming out of years of contingency

Cold War exercise — involving more than 90,000 troops, he noted.

Cavoli said one of the changes in approach to building NATO plans and posture was to ask nations not what they would make available, but what they wouldn’t make available.

“Several allies have contributed their entire military force structure, saved just a tiniest amount, to NATO’s plans,” he said. “As a result of this for the most part, in capital platforms, in large ground units, we’re pretty much where we need to be. We have some gaps in specific places, especially at enablement and logistics, that sort of thing, and those we’re working on through the NATO defense planning process right now.”

While NATO has a readiness program already, “the question is, how vigorously is it exercised, and is there any compliance mechanism inside it?” he said. “Compliance in the alliance is always up to nations,” and there are political considerations of the level of readiness nations want to maintain.

The alliance and the individual nations continue to study the war in Ukraine to develop new techniques and technologies, he said.

“We have a couple of different organizations that study the war in Ukraine, and we’re about to set one up with our Ukrainian colleagues in Poland,” he said. “The [Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre] is going to come together, and that will really be an information exchange center for lessons learned.”

Lessons will be incorporated into future doctrine, he continued. “And then, of course, inside the alliance, we use our exercise program to test new techniques and new technologies that, for the most part, nations bring forward into the exercise when it is quickly evolving.”

In terms of authorities, Cavoli said he has what he needs. That is due to the work of his predecessor, Air Force Gen. Todd Walters, who petitioned the North Atlantic Council to expand authorities that had been proscribed in the post-Cold War era.

“For example, he got the authority to deploy parts or all of the very high readiness Joint Task Force on his plan,” Cavoli said. “He got the authority to perform specified enhanced vigilance activities throughout the [area of responsibility] so he could name an operation and then conduct defensive operations.”

Cavoli said he has the authority to declare up to alert state yellow before going to the North Atlantic Council. “I have the authority to do everything I need to do right now, I believe, in the run up to a period of conflict, to include deploying forces to deter the conflict and then to be in position and be ready if the alliance should invoke Article Five.”

Should that happen, the forward land forces would be just the beginning of NATO’s defense plans, he said.

“We have air forces, we have other forces,” he said. “It’s just the beginning. All of that gets reinforced at time of crisis.”

“The plans are specifically designed, and the timetables are specifically designed, to defend every inch of the alliance’s territory,” he continued. “And I think when we look at what happened in Ukraine, in places like Bucha and Irpin and places like that, Izyum, I have a moral authority, a moral responsibility, to defend every inch of our territory and all the citizens on it.” **ND**



operations in places like Afghanistan that were smaller in scale and involved predictable, cyclical force generation, NATO needed to build plans and readiness to defend Europe, he said. Now, there are more than 300,000 forces at high levels of readiness.

“We have the right number of troops forward right now, we’ve been practicing at large scale our ability to reinforce — as you know, those battle groups need to be reinforced when the time is needed, up to the brigade level — we’ve been rehearsing that. We’ve done extensive readiness checks to make sure they have the right amount of ammunition and so forth.”

That includes large-scale exercises like this year’s Steadfast Defender — NATO’s largest post-

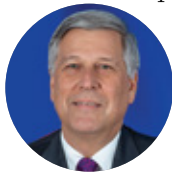
“But I do have the authority and the systems necessary to go inspect readiness,” he said. “We’re changing some of the things we look at, right? So, as we look in Ukraine, we’ve put in an increased emphasis on stockpiles and munitions and supplies on hand and readily available. We’ve extended some of the things we look at to the logistical systems necessary to deploy and to resupply to our troops.

“Instead of just looking at the sharp side of the sword, we’re looking at the whole sword now, and we’ve developed teams that will become active very soon that will go out and check readiness based on my authorities to inspect the readiness of the forces under my command or that are to be under my command in a time of crisis,” he said.

VIEWPOINT

To Maintain NATO Unity, Stay Calm, Play Long Game

BY PHILIP KOSNETT



That an alliance as diverse as NATO has remained vibrant, resilient and growing for 75 years is a remarkable achievement. If NATO is to survive through its centennial, its members will need to continue to adapt to evolving external threats and internal political conditions. That includes dealing with an increased willingness by some members to exploit NATO's consensus-based decision-making to squeeze concessions from allies.

Here are a few observations:

NATO remains indispensable to the defense of Europe, and there is no substitute for U.S. leadership. Many NATO members — including the United States — misunderstood the significance of Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, doing little to prepare for a wider war.

The United States and other allies did provide training to Ukrainian forces, which paid off in 2022, and former Soviet subjects in the Baltics and Eastern Europe were quick to raise the alarm. Russian President Vladimir Putin may have judged in 2022 that the United States was too beset by internal division to respond and that European allies would respond feebly if left on their own.

Instead, the Biden administration and Congress initially overcame domestic politics to provide military assistance and lead an international sanctions campaign. Washington's response has sometimes been hesitant and inconsistent, but it has saved Ukraine and energized NATO — and strengthened unity among Asia-Pacific allies as well.

European fear that a second Trump administration would withdraw from NATO has revived calls for the Euro-

pean Union to develop new military structures. Yet few Europeans would actually prefer to confront a nuclear-armed Russia without their North American allies at their side.

Another observation: that NATO members are willing to pursue their individual strategic interests is the sign of a healthy alliance of partners — within limits.

Remember the Warsaw Pact? Unlike NATO's consensus-based partnership, the Soviet-run Warsaw Pact was a collective of puppet governments whose populations would likely have failed to support Moscow in the event of war. Achieving consensus among NATO democracies responsive to domestic political pressures has not always gone smoothly, but it's preferable to be part of NATO than the Warsaw Pact.

What appears new — or at least more blatant — is the willingness of some members to use their leverage within NATO to pursue their own policy goals at the expense of their allies. The accession of Sweden and Finland was a major boost to the fortunes of the alliance.

It came to pass only after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Hungary spent more than a year squeezing concessions, notably on defense procurement, out of some of their allies. There were howls of outrage in some quarters — including Capitol Hill — that Erdoğan and Orbán were weakening NATO in service to Russia. Meanwhile, U.S. and European diplomats got to work quietly cutting the deals that brought the Nordics into NATO.

I doubt anyone who has played hardball with disciplined, professional Turkish diplomats was surprised Ankara would try to use its leverage, then agree once it had squeezed out every possible concession.

Today's Turkey sees itself on the cusp of becoming a global power and is no more interested in taking orders from Moscow than it is in subordinating its interests to Washington or Brussels. This is a view that is unlikely to change once Erdoğan inevitably passes from the scene. Decades ago, France and Greece withdrew from NATO structures, only to quietly return years later. We are better off with them in the alliance. The same is true of Turkey.

So, how to handle NATO's internal

challenges?

First, don't give in to every demand. Put aside sentimental appeals to unity and angry calls to expel allies — for which there is no mechanism in the NATO charter — and engage in the sort of transactional diplomacy that Ankara and Budapest play.

I prefer carrots such as economic incentives to sticks like visa restrictions and economic sanctions. Even when sticks obtain a short-term goal, they engender popular resentment that can bedevil relations long into the future. But when all else fails...

We should also not hesitate, the next time the leader of a NATO ally threatens to shut down U.S. military facilities, to call their bluff and pack up. It's their country, and there is considerable redundancy built into the system. Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, for example, was once vital to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Incirlik offers little for NATO today that cannot be handled out of bases in the Gulf, Greece or Romania.

We might even find that bilateral relations improve in the absence of inflammatory basing issues. U.S. security ties with the Philippines improved after we shut down our air and naval bases in the 1990s. Winding down the all-American presence at Iceland's Naval Air Station Keflavik in 2006 led to a rotational program in which several NATO allies, including the United States, now share responsibility for Iceland's defense.

Final observation: there is more to rebuilding a capable NATO than passing robust defense budgets.

NATO spending targets measured in GDP are a useful bellwether of national commitment, but once a budget is authorized it can take years — and time in the mud — to raise, train, equip and season a military force. There's no time to lose. **ND**

Retired U.S. Ambassador Philip Kosnett represented the United States in Europe, Asia and the Middle East as a career Foreign Service officer and served as ambassador to Kosovo and chargé d'affaires in Turkey and Iceland.

He is now a senior fellow at the Joint Forces Staff College of National Defense University and the Center for European Policy Analysis. Kosnett is the editor of Boots and Suits: Historical Cases and Contemporary Lessons in Military Diplomacy, Marine Corps University Press, 2023.



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NATO Members Dial Up Defense Spending

It's an election year, and Congress is crafting the annual defense and appropriations bills — that probably won't be passed before the next fiscal year. So, there's plenty of talk in Washington right now about how much the Defense Department should spend in fiscal year 2025 and what it should buy.

Similarly, with the 75th anniversary of NATO, there is plenty of discussion about funding for the alliance and "burden sharing."

There is often confusion — accidental or intentional — around how much the United States spends on NATO and what other NATO nations are required to spend. Some of the confusion comes from the fact that there are two distinct funding sources: direct and indirect contributions from members, as the NATO website explains.

Direct contributions are akin to condo association dues paid by members to fund NATO's civil and military budgets and the NATO Security Investment Program, which includes infrastructure and command-and-control systems, among other things.

Those three common funding areas totaled 3.3 billion euros in 2023. Of that, the United States chipped in around 16 percent — the same as Germany — or roughly \$566 million, which is about the cost of a littoral combat ship.

NATO indirect funding is what member nations spend on their domestic defense to build forces and capabilities that can be made available to NATO if it launches an operation. The indirect funding is where the "2 percent" rule comes from.

At the 2014 Wales Summit — after Russia invaded Ukraine the first time — NATO agreed to have countries not currently spending 2 percent of their GDP on defense plan to reach that target within a decade.

Keep in mind, just like the "code" in the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies, the 2 percent spending target is more of a guideline. And to be clear, that spending is entirely domestic — no nation is asked or obligated to spend or give 2 percent of its GDP to NATO.

Speaking at a Defense Writers Group roundtable in early June, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said alliance members have stepped up.

In "2014, when we created the Wales investment pledge, we had three allies hitting the 2 percent mark," she said. "Today, in 2024, ... we think we're going to be somewhere around 20, 21, 22, possibly 23 allies hitting the 2 percent mark. And that is leaps and bounds from where we started 10 short years ago."

Still, it's not 32, she said. "So, we have to make sure that we keep pushing and get every member of the alliance to lay out a plan to get to the 2 percent within the next few years. And I think 99 percent of the allies have a plan in place."

However, there are countries well above the target, she added. "We now have a whole collection of countries that are inching to 2.5, 3 and beyond. Don't forget, the Poles are already at 4 percent. The Nordics, many of them are talking about 2.5. The United Kingdom is talking about 2.5. This isn't just a small collection of Eastern European allies looking to get to 2 percent or 2.5 or 3 percent."

That said, just because a country is spending say 3 percent of GDP on its defense does not mean that's all to the benefit of NATO. The alliance historically has not dictated to countries what to buy with their defense spends. So, a country could spend a lot on defense but not be buying items or systems that integrate with NATO systems or that add value to combined capabilities.

That's changing, Smith noted, in part driven by NATO's adoption of regional defense plans that provide more clarity on which countries need to provide what capabilities should there be a crisis in their region.

Those plans evolved from NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, heavily informed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"There is a very lengthy, detailed — occasionally bureaucratic — process by which nations come into the alliance and say, 'This is what we're thinking, how does this sound?'" she said. "And now for the first time in decades, the alliance can say, 'Let's look at the regional plans. You, Ger-

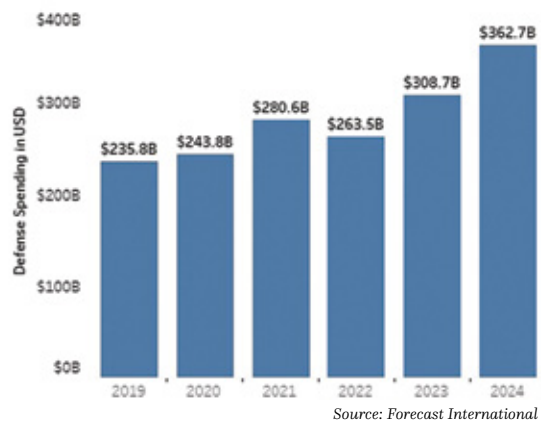


many, you're responsible for these three core tasks; is what you're purchasing right now going to enable you to deliver? And if not, we would ask you to reconsider."

While each country still makes its own decisions, the regional plans create focus and pressure on countries to make investments that benefit the alliance.

"So, what does Germany need to be able to achieve as part of those regional plans, and if their new purchase list doesn't add up, they're going to feel the pressure inside the alliance," Smith said. "So, that is helping us focus the minds of both finance ministers and defense ministers that are coming together with these new

European NATO Countries Total Defense Spending



pots of money to spend on a whole variety of assets and capabilities."

The biggest gap the alliance needs to close right now?

"It's just one word: enablers. I mean, enablers, really that is front and center," she said.

"That is what the alliance is focused on, making sure that we have the assets we need to execute those plans," she continued. "And while many, many countries have allocated just mind-blowing numbers of troops and capabilities to the plans ... you do see that we've got more work to do in certain categories."

Not surprisingly, given the war in Ukraine, air defense was one category she highlighted.

"I do think you're going to see some new announcements on this front," she said. "There is a flurry of activity behind the scenes." **ND**

Buying Security

Politics of War Color Poland's Record Defense Budgets

BY LAURA HECKMANN

KIELCE, Poland — Few countries are paying closer attention to the war in Ukraine than its neighbor to the west — Poland. The conflict has unleashed a spending spree, with the nation doubling its defense budget. It is buying heavily from the United States, seeking not just new weapons systems but also peace of mind.

Defense contractors from across the globe gathered in Kielce, Poland, for the country's largest defense trade show as the government pledged to invest a record 4.7 percent of its gross domestic product in military spending in 2025.

The sprawling grounds of the Targi Kielce exhibition center were host to the 32nd International Defense Industry Exhibition MSPO in September, drawing 53 companies from the United States, 34 from the United Kingdom, 31 from Australia, 30 from Canada, 28 from Germany and 27 from South Korea, among others.

The show's high attendance was reflective of a military modernization effort announced in a strategic review released by the Polish Ministry of Defence in 2016, intended to stretch across 2032. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine changed that, experts said.

Poland shares a border with Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, and its proximity to the conflict was palpable amid the frenzied exhibition hall and its closely guarded sessions. Invitation-only meetings discussed Polish security and partnership cooperation, and exhibiting vendors were hesitant to speak to media "because there's a war going on next door," one said.

Andrzej Duda, the president of Poland, said during the exhibition's opening ceremony that the conference was a "very important event and very significant one for Poland from the perspective of our economy," but also a "pivotal event" for "our part of Europe" and the world, he said.

He had "no doubt whatsoever" that increasing the level of defense spending will prevent "another great global

war."

Daniel Darling, vice president of market insights at Forecast International, called Poland's modernization plan "very ambitious" and "expensive," involving sea, air, space and missile defense.

"They had planned on basically running the transformation out to about 2030, and then suddenly, on the eve of the Ukraine invasion by Russia, the Polish government was like, 'This is no longer a joke. This is too close to home. We need to accelerate everything in terms of our military modernization,'" Darling said in an interview.

Poland's defense budget jumped overnight from 2.5 percent of GDP to 3 percent, Darling said, "and then 4 percent this year. And they're going to try to get to 5 percent in 2025. ... This is — in a very short amount of time — a massive financial infusion."

Poland's budget proposal for 2025 includes \$48.7 billion in defense spending, up from \$41.5 billion in its 2024 budget.

A Polish defense executive said on

Defense Dept. photo

A U.S. paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division introduces a Polish soldier to an M110A1 squad designated marksman rifle in Zamość, Poland.



the sidelines of the exhibition that the country's surge in defense spending is a societal reaction to war.

When "the war has broken close to you, the society creates what is happening," he said. "You look at some views from Bucha or Irpin, where the Russian soldiers literally kill the normal civilian population, [then] you're holding faster and you are very afraid."

In short: Polish society is afraid, and it is willing to spend more money for defense, he said.

Darling traced Poland's societal fears back to the end of the Cold War, when the country became independent again after the fall of the Soviet Union.

"Poland's obsession was really [to] fix its compass to the West," he said. "And to do that, it needed to become a NATO member and to become a [European Union] member. That is your security pillar and your economic pillar."

Aligning itself to the West and away from Russia was a guarantee of deeper integration with Western structures and alliances, "and in particular, the United States was seen as the security guarantor of Poland," Darling said. "The United States was the most consistent defense of Western values and freedom in Europe."

While Poland is no stranger to partnership with the United States, 2023 was a banner year for defense spending between the two nations, with Poland coming in as the number one source of foreign military sales for the United States. And the implications of the sales go deeper than new toys.

"Politics intrudes always," Darling said. "And diplomacy and geopolitics intrude on arms procurement." If the Poles feel that the United States is going to be their number one ally and rescuer "if a war breaks out on that Eastern front, then you're going to want to have as much compatibility and interoperability with that ally."

Procurement is basically political and military alignment with a partner nation, he said. "And that's what the Poles are doing."

Poland's recent procurement deals with the United States have included a \$4.6 billion contract for 32 Lockheed Martin F-35A jets, \$10 billion for 96 Boeing Apache helicopters, hundreds of Abrams battle tanks and a \$2 billion Foreign Military Financing direct loan agreement announced in July.

"The F-35 is the most modern combat air system on the market and they're purchasing accordingly," Dar-



Poland's first F-35A at Lockheed Martin's production facility in Fort Worth, Texas

ling said.

But agreements aren't always about the systems, the Polish executive said.

"This is buying not the equipment, but some type of insurance," he said. "Mostly, it's political ways of buying." Some procurement "makes no sense," he said, speaking of the Apache helicopter agreement. "When they will be delivered, they will be obsolete."

He said the era of the attack helicopter ended in 1986, "when Americans gave the first Stinger missile to the Mujahideen." Now, a "single soldier has a relatively high chance to destroy the very sophisticated combat helicopter with a very cheap, effective solution. Even in Ukraine, we see the relatively simple drones hitting the helicopters."

Darling said while there is an element of insurance, there is also an element of urgency. Systems may be obsolete in 10 to 15 years, but "what do you have now? And that becomes the question. If you're accelerating your defense procurement, it's because you need a solution today and not tomorrow."

Flying legacy Russian helicopters that require approval from Russia to update is "just unfeasible," he said. "You don't have the benefit of waiting to see what the next-generation capability is. You need to move now, and the [Apache] is good, if not better, than any other attack helicopter out there."

Retired Army Col. Garth Winterle, former project manager for tactical radios, said during an interview on the exhibition floor that Poland buying U.S. defense systems is also an opportunity for the country to increase interoperability with both the United States and NATO.

"If they partner with U.S. firms, especially in areas of communications and IT, they can increase their information sharing," he said, noting that interoperability remains a challenge between European

and U.S. equipment, particularly at the communications level.

Because of the existing gaps, communications companies have "a lot of interest within Europe," he said.

One example is NATO developing an interoperable waveform called ESSOR that "isn't going to be available to the United States," he said. "So how is that really interoperable?"

For companies wanting to do business with Poland, some have an easier path than others. The majority of the Polish business boom has fallen to large companies that have offices in Poland, Winterle said. For smaller companies, understanding "how [Poland] buys things" and "who to talk to is not necessarily an open book," he said.

"Many other companies are looking for Polish partners that can give us those insights into what's going on in Poland, how to better partner with Poland," he added. "That's why we show up" to exhibitions like MSPO — "not just to try and make sales, but to form those inroads."

The MSPO exhibition's eight exhibit halls were bursting at the seams, but eventually Poland's mass modernization will reach a tipping point, Darling said. "Because Poland has paid out a lot of debt for these trinkets that they're buying ... there will be budgetary pressure."

Historically Poland runs "very lean" with its budget, he said. "They're very fiscally sound. ... But now in light of this build up, you have to borrow a lot, so suddenly that becomes a factor."

Poland has a constitutional limit for debt at 60 percent of GDP, he said. "At some point, this will come to an end."

While Poland has some new means in place to supplement defense budgeting, such as the Armed Forces Support Fund, "again, at some point, this will reach a tipping point, and they will have purchased what they feel they need, and there will be a slowdown," Darling said.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and the new government "basically have to keep going with what the previous government was doing," because if they don't there could be a perception the government is "being soft on national security at a time a war is going on next door," he said. "So, there's that kind of tension, too."

"It's just a lot of change in a short amount of time," he said. "And it's certainly a lot of money. Time will tell if it's money well spent." **ND**

EU Emerges as New Player in Europe's Common Defense



It wasn't that long ago when NATO concerned itself with defense matters and the European Union stuck with economics and trade.

Among the many repercussions Russian President Vladimir Putin probably didn't expect after his 2022 invasion of Ukraine was the EU jumping into the national security realm.

Josep Borrell, vice president of the European Commission and high representative of the union for foreign affairs and security policy, recalled the night all that changed.

"I was in my house in Madrid one week after the invasion of Ukraine when on my phone I started talking with all my colleagues and to tell them, 'Why don't we use a European Peace Facility to supply arms to Ukraine?'" he said during a talk at the NATO Public Forum held on the sidelines of the treaty organization's 75th Anniversary Summit in July.

There was no precedent for setting up the European Peace Facility, a fund that would provide resources for mutual security on the continent — so far specifically for Ukraine.

"We agreed in a couple of hours that we could use these [funds] in order to supply arms to a country at war. Something that has never happened before. It was a revolutionary idea," he said.

The fund would ultimately receive 5 billion euros in its first tranche and another 5 billion euros to assist Ukraine, he said.

Since the war started, the EU has found itself increasingly involved in matters that used to be NATO's alone.

The EU is not an alternative to NATO, but a stronger EU means a stronger NATO, Borrell told an audience at the forum. Almost all 27 EU members are also members of NATO, he noted.

The EU in 2017 launched the European Defense Fund, which is intended for EU member nation companies to "deliver innovative and interoperable defense technologies and equipment. It offers support and advice to participants throughout the entire cycle of research and development," the fund's official website said.

The fund has a budget of nearly

8 billion euros for 2021-2027, with 2.7 billion euros allocated for collaborative defense research and 5.3 billion euros for collaborative capability development projects that complement national contributions, the website said.

Guillaume Galtier, a policy officer at the European Commission involved with administering the fund, said: "What the EU is bringing today is financial power because we are injecting new money, fresh money in the defense sector, to the defense industrial players in the EU."

About 30 percent of the money is earmarked for "innovative military technology, and the emphasis is on boosting small and medium sized companies, with incentives built in "to make sure that the big players get in touch with the [small and medium-sized companies] and attract them to projects," he said at the Eurosatory conference in Paris held prior to the NATO Summit.

The EU fund is also tackling financing barriers, he added. European defense companies have struggled to receive financing from the continent's banks, which see the industry on par with tobacco, fossil fuels and other industries that suffer from bad publicity.

"We're trying to improve the access to finance for the defense sector, which is a real issue as you know in Europe. We're try-

ing to solve that," Galtier said.

A NATO declaration that emerged from the summit on its second day acknowledged the EU's growing role in defense, stating that the European Union remains a "unique and essential partner" for NATO, with cooperation extending to space, cybersecurity, climate and defense as well as emerging and disruptive technologies.

Mircea Geoană, deputy secretary general of NATO, said at the forum: "We should really bring NATO and the EU even closer strategically by using the respective [toolboxes] of the two organizations."

Meanwhile, aid to Ukraine so far has amounted to 110 billion euros, 40 billion of which is in military aid, and the rest in economic aid, Borrell noted.

The EU is also trying to revitalize a European defense industrial base, which most acknowledge had been greatly diminished after the end of the Cold War.

"In one year, we have doubled our capacity to produce ammunition," Borrell said. "And we have started giving Ukrainians financing for them to develop their own industrial capacity to produce arms."

The EU has taken some \$300 million in frozen Russian assets and handed the money over to Ukraine to kickstart its defense industry, he noted.

As for further involvement in security, Borrell said there might be more than just funding economic development in the future. EU members have security interests that are outside NATO's purview.

"I don't see NATO going to the Sahel, for example ... and we have a lot of security problems there," he said.

Center for a New American Security analysts Nicholas Lokker and Kate Johnston posited in a recent *Foreign Policy* commentary that it's the EU that troubles Putin the most.

Russia spent a lot of its energy influencing the recent European Parliament elections, where Euroskeptics and members of the far right made significant gains, they noted.

"It is the EU, not NATO, that presents the real existential threat to the Kremlin," they wrote. "That's because Ukraine's membership in and integration into the EU could deliver a fatal blow to Russian President Vladimir Putin and his regime by turning Ukraine into what Russia most fears: a political, economic and sociocultural alternative to Russia itself." **ND**



INTEGRATED WARFARE

NATO Allies Get on Same Page During Biggest Exercise

BY SEAN CARBERRY

BEMOWO PISKIE, Poland — The nation of Murinus has invaded Poland. Task Force Dragoon, comprising U.S. and NATO forces across Germany, Poland and Lithuania, is combating the lead battalion of the enemy force.

Three U.S. Army Apache helicopters emerge from the tree line behind the Red Diamond range in north-eastern Poland. They launch a barrage of rockets and chain gun rounds on simulated targets hundreds of yards across the vast, muddy field.

As the echoes of chain gun fire fade into the raw air, booms from the guns of U.S. Abrams tanks and Strykers, German and Polish tanks and Italian infantry fighting vehicles rattle the eardrums and chests of onlookers gathered at the range.

The Apaches return and add to the cacophony of NATO integrated fires pounding the simulated forces from Murinus.

Maj. Jamie Holm, regimental fire support officer and lead of the U.S. Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment's innovations cell, summarizes the live fire exercise to the senior officers from NATO nations watching in the control tower at the range.

"Through the scaling of the mission partner network, the forward land force brigade achieved a remarkable feat: the creation of a unified common operating picture," he said, standing before an array of screens displaying drone feeds and battlefield and command data from positions in Germany, Poland and Lithuania.

"This achievement enables the synchronization of complex fires and maneuver actions, empowering the allied force to maximize effects down-range and operate as a unified and interoperable force," he continued.

The April event was part of two overlapping exercises, Holm explained in an interview. Saber Strike, a recurring U.S. Army-led exercise to show presence in the region, started with U.S. and German forces conducting a tactical road march from Germany to Poland and eventually to Lithuania.

The objective of the other exercise, Griffin Shock, was to expand a NATO combat battalion into a forward land force brigade to conduct combined operations. Both exercises fell under the umbrella of NATO's Steadfast Defender 2024, the alliance's largest exercise since the Cold War.

For all the drama on the range, the real action was in a nearby tent. There, members of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment scurried about with troops from NATO nations and coders and techs from Palantir, Klas, Booz Allen, Juniper Networks and other companies. They were operating and refining the technologies that allowed allies to share a common operating picture and communicate in their own languages through real-time translation tools.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Payton Baker, targeting officer in the 2nd Cavalry Regiment innovations cell, said the experimental applications and hardware were designed to have NATO allies and partners able to plug in and interoperate on day zero of an exercise, or a conflict.

"What we found is we're not going to have the space and the time to show up in a time of crisis and consolidate and spend weeks trying to get all of our systems to talk," he said. "We have to build combat power en route and show up and quickly be able to perform whatever tasks that we might be asked to perform."

The primary solution 2nd Cavalry Regiment brought to the exercise to get U.S., Polish, Italian, Spanish, Croatian and other troops on the same operating page was the Mission Partner Kit, which included portable Radio Integrated Communications Suite boxes — used to connect radios and provide cloud-enabled, real-time translation — and smartphones.

"We give them essentially ... four apps — it provides persistent chat, persistent voice, collaboration tools and then the [Tactical Assault Kit] software," Baker said. All the apps run on Palantir's Tactical Mission Data Platform, which provides a common operating picture and functions as a data ingestion tool that integrates with program-of-record systems like the Army's Integrated Tactical Network.

"Think about all the data the Army generates in general, most of it is unstructured and takes staff members hours of work to be able to put this on Excel documents and PowerPoints," Baker said. The Tactical Mission Data Platform, or TMDP, allows data ranging from position location information of U.S. and allied forces to logistics and maintenance reports to ammunition levels to be collated in one place.

Holm said the ability to ingest and tag data from chats and log reports directly into the common operating picture facilitates better decision-making.

"When we do meetings, it's less about reporting 'I've got X of Y vehicles,' and that's just known," he said. "And we can spend time talking about, 'Here's a decision I want to make, here's my reasoning for it,' which is what commanders should be spending time talking about."

The 2nd Cavalry Regiment is heavily supporting the testing and development of interoperable technology under the U.S. Army Europe and Africa headquarters' data-driven warfare initiative and its four pillars of becoming more survivable, interoperable, data-enabled and predictive, Baker added.

Capt. James O'Keefe, the regiment's assistant S2, explained that TMDP operates at the unclassified level on program-of-record Army computers and also personal devices and can update in real time through "live layers," he said.

"That means that if somebody else ... in a different command post is working on the movement and maneuver map, when they make a change, it's brought automatically into our common operational picture," he continued. "You don't have to dig into the shared drive, find version 17 and get somebody to update all 50 graphics."

"That synchronization is small, but huge in terms of how much time and button clicking" is eliminated, he said.

Holm said Griffin Shock 24 built on last year's exercise that had early versions of some of the interoperability tools. "We weren't able to scale it at that level yet. ... But we had a clear idea coming out of it

what we're going to need. So, we've spent a year working on that."

The result was the proliferation of the Mission Partner Kits and Radio Integrated Communications Suite boxes that convert radio signals to internet protocol, which extends range and facilitates translation so troops can speak in their own languages.

The 2nd Cavalry Regiment provided the Germans with the Mission Partner Kits before they started their road march to Poland, Holm said.

"We're obviously seeing our own existing position location information. We're seeing theirs as well and greatly aided the ability to control their movement here. And when we arrived, we distributed those kits to the Spanish, the Italians and the NATO battle group here," he said. "Everybody we gave it to absolutely loved it."

One Polish officer, who requested anonymity due to the sensitive nature of his position, confirmed that assessment.

"We know the movement of troops, and the situational awareness increased," he said. "I think this system is a great improvement for the tactical level where the

tors near the front lines, O'Keefe said.

"In terms of the close fight, I think we're already close to the capability of not needing to have vendors there," he said. "But they're always going to be involved because there's no end state where this tool or this collection of tools just stops development."

Nor does the Army want to be tied to a particular contractor, he added.

"We've always got new vendors coming in who are looking to incorporate new tools. Even out here while we're doing Saber Strike, we're already looking on to subsequent and secondary and third objectives after Saber Strike," he said, adding that large language models are of particular interest.

Another key focus is looking at "code as infrastructure," he said. That means moving away from the approach of "you are getting a bespoke device, you are getting it from this particular vendor to perform this function. And then your command post is full of 30 different kinds of computers for all these different functions that you have to perform.

"We're bringing it down to one device where we've got either thin clients or applications that are

they're still in Germany," O'Keefe said. "And there's really no limitation on where we want to put them."

It's just a matter of having internet connectivity — whether through commercial internet, 5G, Starlink or Army satellite communications, he said.

Lt. Gen. Charles Costanza, who took command of Army V Corps shortly before the exercise, said the interoperability on display, with a U.S. cavalry squadron conducting operations with a brigade in Lithuania, another squadron operating in Poland's Suwalki Gap and the live fire exercise in Bemowo Piskie, was his biggest takeaway.

"It's 11 different countries that have been involved in this exercise," he said. "The way they've done that is that the 2nd Cavalry Regiment has figured out how to get all the different multinational systems to actually at least form a common operational picture, they all have the same view" and the ability to communicate.

"I think that's a great starting point. We know there are some things we've still got to work on," he continued. "The logistics systems — we've got to get ... those to communicate, we know it, and we're working on that. And same

thing with the air picture. So, with the multinational systems right now, some of them can talk to each other, some of them can't."

O'Keefe said one priority going forward will be getting TMDP operating at the classified level. And Holm said there is more work to do with the translation tools.

"We should have spent more time configuring the expected set" of translation protocols before the exercise, he said. "We didn't really get a handle on what we needed until we got here. And so going back with the developer and having them make the corrections for that got us to

be able to do basic translations, but it wasn't as much as we could have had."

Still, immediate reviews of the exercise and the interoperability tools were positive, he said.

"And an example of some degree of success — the Germans wanted to keep the Mission Partner Kits because it was useful for them. OK, probably some indicator that it's better than unnecessary junk," he said. **ND**



Polish soldiers pose in front of a tactical vehicle during the Saber Strike 24 exercise.

speed of information is crucial."

The Mission Partner Kits are still a work in progress, officers said, noting that the first iteration the regiment received last November needed a lot of development. That's why so many civilians from the vendors were on site during the exercise to continue troubleshooting and expanding the capabilities of the tools. The goal is to minimize the need to have contrac-

fulfilling those needs. And what that means is that the contractor can do a lot of support outside of being physically there," he said.

That was another central aspect of Saber Strike and Griffin Shock, the officers said: reducing electronic signature and moving command posts outside of enemy reach.

"The regimental enabling command posts for this operation,

NATO'S FRONTLINE

Finland's Small Defense Industry Suited For Competition

BY STEW MAGNUSON

VAALIMAA, Finland — The superstore yards away from Finland's border with Russia was devoid of shoppers.

The building — the size of a warehouse — was stocked with about any consumer good one could pack in a car — everything from shampoo to garden hoses.

There were several checkout lanes, but only one had a cashier — and she looked bored.

Normally, some two million people pass through Vaalimaa annually, making it one of the busiest land crossings in the European Union, but the border was closed — another consequence of Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to invade Ukraine in 2022.

The miscalculation prompted Finland to join NATO on April 4, 2023. That in turn prompted Russia to send thousands of asylum seekers to the border, which overwhelmed authorities and forced Finland to close its borders in two-month intervals until it can update its immigration laws.

"Border crossing point is closed!" a sign hanging on a gate in late April 2024 read.

Vaalimaa is the southernmost crossing on a border with Russia that stretches another 800 miles north to the Arctic Circle. Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo recently called the line of demarcation "NATO's frontline."

Tuija Karanko, secretary general of PIA — an acronym in Finnish for the Finnish Defense and Aerospace Industries Association — said sharing the border with a much larger neighbor has shaped how the government and defense industry developed their unique methods and policies on how to acquire and maintain weapon systems.

For example, while Finland has large military manpower reserves, there aren't enough personnel to do everything, she said.

"We have utilized digital technologies for decades now to bring that force multiplier effect. And that is what we excel in. And I would say that we are sort of years ahead, maybe even a decade ahead of some

of our partner nations," she said in an interview in her Helsinki office.

Finland has a "Concept of Comprehensive Security" policy that grew out of years of being next to Russia and being on its own without NATO treaty guarantees.

It calls for all parts of society — government, the public, non-governmental organizations and businesses — to take part in security. With a population of only 5.5 million, Finland has more than 900,000 citizens in the military or who have had military training as former conscripts.

Part of the policy is to do a lot with a little, and while the nation can now call on NATO for help, for decades it strived for neutrality and faced the prospect of being on its own in a conflict.

Readiness rates for a small nation with limited resources and a larger rival on its border are a serious matter, and there is no room for large percentages of aircraft, ships or vehicles sitting idle unable to perform, she explained.

That is why all maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrades are done in Finland by industry workers, which frees up warfighters to do other tasks.

Finland acquires most of its big weapons systems from overseas, and when it does so, it demands that the technical data comes with it so it can tender maintenance, repair and overhaul, or MRO, contracts for bids.

"We are always looking for cost effectiveness. So, this is one sort of way of reducing costs. Believe it or not, industry can be more cost efficient in your regular MRO activities than the government," she said.

Karanko — back when Finland was shopping around for a new jet fighter — liked to show visitors a picture of an F/A-18 that had landed on a highway. Next to it was a mobile system that could meet the aircraft where it landed to refuel and do basic maintenance to keep it flying in austere locations.

"We have 62 F/A-18s. We don't have any more, and this is a hard concept for U.S. companies to understand — that there is no ramp-up

capacity anywhere," she said. There is no thought of sending equipment overseas for repairs or overhauls.

Meanwhile, there is no favoritism for Finnish contractors. Foreign companies are welcome to bid on these maintenance, repair and overhaul contracts. That is sometimes frustrating for local companies who think they should be favored, Karanko said. On the other hand, the competition has forced them to be the best at what they do, she added.

Esa Rautalinko, Finnish defense contractor Patria's president and CEO, repeated what many other experts in Scandinavia told *National Defense* privately about Finland. It never bought into the "peace dividend" — that after the Soviet Union collapsed, it was no longer necessary to invest in the military or its industrial base. Finland always had its eye trained on its more powerful neighbor to the east, he said sitting in a meeting room at the company's Helsinki branch office.

Other European nations "were pretty limited for 30 years. And whatever was procured was procured for international crisis management and stuff like that," not useful weapon systems for major conflict, he said.

"But that was something Finland did not do," he added.

Even when economic times were tough, the ministry of defense did not turn protectionist and still held open competitions for defense MRO contracts, he added.

Meanwhile, a year after joining NATO as a member, the Finnish industrial base has already seen some changes, Karanko said. PIA has about 180 member companies and is growing. One reason is NATO membership, she noted.

"And then, of course, is the security situation. We have more and more component providers or digital services providers who are not traditional defense companies who are joining us," she said. They see business opportunities, but they also want to contribute to defense and security, she added.

The Finnish defense industrial base's strengths are armored vehicles,

mortars and command, control, communication, computers and sensors, she said.

“We see more and more Finnish companies coming together with mostly European companies at the moment for European defense, research and development programs,” she said.

One conduit for defense tech development in Finland will be the newest office for NATO’s Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic, or DIANA, which is being set up this year by VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland.

This DIANA branch will focus on next-generation communication systems, 6G technology, cybersecurity, quantum and space technologies and is looking to a January 2025 opening, Sauli Eloranta, vice president of defense at VTT, told *National Defense*.

“Dual-use defense technologies have had a very high barrier to entry. So, small [Finnish] companies just haven’t had the bandwidth or capability or capacity to address that part of the business,” he said.

Now that Finland is a NATO member, its businesses are looking to form more partnerships, with local companies branching out overseas or for other nations to come to Finland.

The accelerator’s services will be specifically targeted at startups with limited experience in the defense and security sector and training on how to develop business opportunities in the defense sector, he added.

Karanko said the nation’s defense industrial base cannot survive on Finland’s military alone. “We need to go abroad because even if Finland were to procure everything from Finland — which they’re not doing — the country is too small to keep alive such an industrial base,” she said.

PIA is organizing its SecD-Day defense trade show and exhibition in Helsinki Jan. 29-30, 2025, to highlight its local industry and help facilitate partnerships, she said.

One company that will be exhibiting is Patria, the country’s best known defense contractor. Patria is majority owned by the Finnish government, with Norway’s Kongsberg Defense and Aerospace as the minority shareholder. It had net sales of 734 million euros in 2023 with an operating profit of 69 million euros.

It employs some 3,385 personnel and is best known for its AMV fighting vehicles as well as a deal signed in 2023 with Lockheed Martin



to join the F-35 industrial consortium. It will maintain Finland’s Joint Strike Fighters and participate in the global supply chain by manufacturing landing gear doors in Finland.

Rautalinko noted that Finland was a NATO partner for 30 years, but there were still some questions among allies on where the nation stood.

Now, “it’s absolutely clear that we are allied. So, I think the possibility — and even an eagerness — to share certain technologies is now on a different level compared to where it used to be,” he said.

Shortly after Finland joined NATO, Rautalinko engaged in side talks at defense trade shows where fellow executives told him: “We never told you guys that there would be certain possibilities, but you were not NATO members, and we have really never brought this up, but now we can discuss.”

There are already a few examples of intelligence and signal processing systems specifically developed for the Finnish military that had never been exported. But after the NATO membership, the items have been sold abroad, he noted.

Membership “was sort of the final missing piece in a sense,” he said, noting that the Finnish Defense Forces can also discuss technologies more in depth with other allied countries, and that ultimately might generate requirements and business opportunities.

All three interviewees touted the toughness of the defense equipment produced in Finland as all of it must function in the harshest winter conditions.

“We are operating in a country that has special circumstances when it comes to climate, freezing temperatures, things like that,” Eloranta said. “You can say if it can operate in Finland, it can operate anywhere.”

Sweden, Norway and Finland — now that they are all NATO members

— not only comprise a formidable military bloc to Russia’s west, but there are also opportunities for defense industry cooperation that has been largely absent in the past.

For example, “Finland is the land of Nokia and Sweden is the land of Ericsson,” Eloranta pointed out. The two telecommunications giants can help NATO with its 6G or FutureG requirements, he added.

Rautalinko said the Nammo Group — one of the world’s largest ammo and rocket motor suppliers — is 50 percent owned by the government of Norway and 50 percent by Patria. It has manufacturing facilities across Scandinavia.

As far as further cooperation among the three Nordic nations, traditionally each has had its own strengths, Rautalinko said, with Norway very capable in the maritime domain, Sweden with its ability to build jet fighters and submarines and Finland more oriented toward land forces.

“Looking at their products and solutions and so forth, there isn’t too much overlap,” he said.

Finland has always been a big buyer of Swedish defense products while Sweden has procured military vehicles from Finland for the past 40 years, he noted.

“I think the big thing is that as we are now all allied, this is the first time when the defense forces can really open up their books and start drawing defense plans. ... That might bring certain possibilities” for industrial cooperation, Rautalinko said.

Eloranta added: “Throughout history, Finland has always been highlighting the need for strong national defense — and it still is — but now there is the NATO layer on top of that,” he said.

“That’s maybe the main thing to recognize, that we are NATO now. It’s still a bit odd in our mouth, but that’s how it is,” he said. **ND**

PORT CALL

U.S. Army Comes Ashore in NATO's High North

BY SEAN CARBERRY

NARVIK, Norway — A whining mechanical sound pierces the quiet morning in a small port ringed by snow-capped peaks. The ramp of a massive blue and white cargo ship gradually unfolds and lands with a thud on the pier.

Then, diesel engines rumble to life as U.S. Army soldiers wearing hard hats and neon yellow vests over their fatigues line up in the crisp Arctic air to offload some 500 vehicles and containers of equipment from the 228-meter Arc Integrity cargo ship.

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division and its combat vehicles were a long way from balmy Fort Johnson, Louisiana.

The deployment involved many “firsts” for the brigade, the U.S. military and its Nordic NATO allies, said Brig. Gen. Steve Carpenter, commanding general of the 7th Army Training Command.

“With the addition of Finland and Sweden, the opportunity presented itself to go ahead and offload a brigade combat team here at Narvik. It has never been done before,” he said. And a U.S. Army brigade had never transited by land across Norway and Sweden to conduct a combined exercise in Finland. “You’re going to have 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, a storied brigade, a storied division, fighting underneath the NATO banner underneath a Finnish land component.”

The conditions on April 24 were permissive, both in terms of the clear skies and the lack of an adversary trying to stop the soldiers from coming ashore as the 838th Transportation Battalion and the 627th Movement Control Team color-tagged vehicles and containers and staged them next to the ship. That allowed the U.S.

Army and its Nordic allies to assess the port infrastructure and layout should U.S. forces need to deploy to the High North in the heat of battle.

“I think we can learn from this,” Carpenter said. “At the end of the day, if war would break out in Europe between NATO and Russia — and whoever decides to partner with Russia — everything’s contested. Our ports in the United States are contested. The transatlantic movement is contested. Africa is contested.”

Thus, NATO needs multiple ports it can use in a crisis “so you can do things like deception, as an example, or heaven forbid if you start losing some of these ships, to have enough mass coming,” he said. “When it comes to large-scale combat, it’s not just how rapidly we move and position forces, but our ability to mass” forces simultaneously.

The port operations in Narvik were part of NATO’s Steadfast Defender 2024 exercise — the alliance’s largest post-Cold War exercise to test allied and partnered capabilities to conduct a large-scale fight, he said.

The multi-month exercise included 17,000 U.S. troops and 23,000 more from 20 NATO and partner countries and involved operations and activities in 13 European countries. Steadfast Defender comprised three series, Carpenter explained. The port exercises fell under the second series, Immediate Response, the “deployment, reception, staging and onward movement of a division’s worth of combat power across Europe,” he said.

The choice of Narvik for Immediate Response was not accidental. The strategic port deep in the fjords of the Arctic Circle has history. A cemetery not far from the port is the final resting place for British, French, Polish and Norwegian service members who died fighting the Nazi invasion of the port in 1940.

Today, Germany is one of the largest powers in NATO, and the U.S. military relies heavily on German ports to move troops and equipment in and out of Europe. But that’s changing, said Maj. Vonnie Wright, public affairs officer for the 21st Theater Sustainment Command based in Germany.

“We keep just using Germany ... the easy button,” he said. “Then, let’s say a crisis kicks off and you can’t use it, where else are we going to go? We haven’t really, truly tested a lot of ports.”

That’s why the Army started an aggressive effort a few years ago to find alternatives, he said. That involves determining what a port can handle in volume and size of equipment and evaluating whether the adjacent road and rail networks can handle the load.

“And then if we can’t do as much as we would like to, what do our NATO partners need?” he continued, saying



the Army is messaging allies, “Hey, in order to assist to defend Europe as a NATO partner and ally, we need to try to help expand your rail network or expand your road network.”

The United States has been pushing for more infrastructure investment in Europe, he said.

“We have to be more interoperable to where any unit, any country’s set of vehicles can transport all over the different roads, road networks, rail networks,” he said.

And that’s why a significant aspect of the exercise in the High North was evaluating the roads, bridges and railways in the Nordic countries to determine if they could handle the U.S. vehicles, Wright said. It was a comparatively easy test given

that the 10th Mountain's 3rd Brigade Combat Team is light infantry and doesn't roll with Abrams tanks or Stryker combat vehicles.

As part of the operation, U.S. Navy Seabees came to Norway to construct a temporary bridge to test in case NATO forces need to quickly replace a bridge taken out during a conflict.

While the United States is working with NATO partners to assess and improve infrastructure, the Army is also assessing its equipment, Wright said.

"We're always looking at modernization — how to adapt, especially here

or tail, said Col. Ryan Barnett, commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of 10th Mountain Division.

"The big portion from a NATO perspective is, how quickly we can use a port in Norway — under a non-contested environment right now — what are the requirements here, and how quickly can we get the tooth to the border to a defensive posture to help out our Finnish partners and allies?" he said.

While the conditions at the port were permissive, the Army was assessing the potential multi-domain threats, he said. "How do we do

power, forward position it and then ultimately move it to the east."

Norwegian officers responsible for providing security, logistics and sustainment said the exercise was similar in nature but larger in scale than many they had performed before.

"For us, it's the security part of it — do we have enough for that?" said Col. Bjornar Erickson, district commander of Norway's Home Guard 16, the unit responsible for port security.

"We try to learn it enough compared to the threat we are in now," he continued. "So as of now, it's quite low-threat here. But you also have to adapt to the situation." They had ammunition and supplies stored "so we are capable to escalate if we need."

Aside from the size of the unit arriving at the port, there was one other major difference to the exercise: the direction of the movement, he said.

"Before Sweden and Finland became part of NATO, it was solely focused north-south," he said. "Now, it's more focused east-west. This port, the railway and this is going to make it even more important [because] the NATO border is pushed eastwards towards Finland."

"I need to also cooperate with the Swedish Home Guard on the border and coordinate with them, and so that's the difference," he said.

Once the 3rd Brigade Combat Team arrived in Finland, the exercise plan was to spend a month in Finland integrated with Finnish troops in person and through virtual and

constructive technology to conduct the largest ever U.S. Army exercise with the Finns, Barnett said.

"Part of this exercise is to determine what we need to do to get our communication systems both at the unclassified level and at the classified level" integrated, he said.

And the U.S. Army will be taking orders from the 3rd Finnish Division, he said.

"We'll integrate our fires in Finland," he said. "We'll integrate our dismounted infantry in Finland, and we'll really learn from each other how the 10th Mountain operates in the High North, how the Finnish fight, how they would fight ... should adversaries cross the border, and then how we integrate in that process." **ND**



The Arc Integrity cargo ship in the port of Narvik during NATO's Immediate Response exercise

in NATO because here the roads are a bit more narrow," he said. "So, there are always different aspects of how we need to modernize our own equipment to be more interoperable because the whole deal with interoperability, and we keep preaching, is we want to be able to use each other's networks, each other's equipment and want to be able to fight alongside each other seamlessly. So, there is always a look at how we can adapt to European standards and then them to our standards."

Among the many firsts of Immediate Response was the reliance on Norway, Sweden and Finland to provide port security and sustainment so the 10th Mountain forces could deploy combat power, or tooth, with minimal sustainment and logistics resources,

this if we're contested in the cyber domain? How do we defend ourselves? How do we defend the port?

"The other is the drones ... making sure that we can keep the surveillance off this port and off the staging areas. And then the next piece is obviously the artillery and long-range missiles that are being demonstrated in the war in Ukraine. How can we defend ourselves against that?" he said.

Much of that would fall to Norway and its 9,500 active-duty army soldiers and 40,000 Home Guard forces.

"It's about scale," Barnett said. "How can we integrate them into operations? I mean, this is a great example of how Norway can help assist the alliance, right? Just secure ports to allow us to bring in combat

NORTHERN LIGHT

Sweden Brings Defense Industrial Might to NATO

BY STEW MAGNUSON



A welder at Saab Kockums shipyard

KARLSKRONA, Sweden — Inside the submarine assembly facility at the Saab Kockums AB shipyard in southern Sweden, two workers prepare to slip into a launch tube to do some welding.

But this is no ordinary job, explained Per-Ola Hedin, chief engineer for the A26 submarine program. These subs are made of a special steel alloy currently only available in Sweden. It gives the boats extra strength so the metal can bend more without cracking.

The complication is that to weld, the steel must be heated to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

“This is something that can’t be done with a robot,” he explained to a group of U.S.-based reporters who were taking a tour of the facility.

One of the workers will have to slip inside the very tight and very hot launch tube.

“When he is baked on both sides, we will pull him out and replace him with his colleague,” Hedin joked.

The Kockums shipyard is a point of pride for Saab, Sweden’s largest defense contractor. When the company bought it from its German owners about a decade ago, it resembled something one would see in a Soviet-era, Eastern European factory, Hedin said. Its manufacturing technology was hopelessly out of date, and it wasn’t a pleasant place to work. It has taken some 10 years for the company to modernize the shipyard by bringing it up to standards, he said.

The boat was one of two new

A26 Blekinge-class submarines the nation plans to launch in the next couple years that are destined to patrol the Baltic Sea and go head-to-head with Russian counterparts.

Hedin spoke just about one month after Sweden joined NATO as its 32nd full member. The alliance not only gained its formidable military but an industrial base that punches far above its weight when considering it has a population of slightly more than 10 million.

Sweden not only operates a fleet of submarines but it also designs and builds them — as it does its frigates. It produces the Gripen jet fighter. It develops and manufactures military-grade vehicles, early airborne warning radars, artillery systems and a host of small arms and munitions. It manufactures satellites and will soon host the only launch pad capable of sending rockets to orbit in Europe.

Göran Mårtensson, director general and head of the Swedish Defense Materiel Administration, likes to point out that when it comes to annual arms exports, Sweden normally is just under the top 20, but when it comes to annual arms exports per capita, Sweden is usually near the top three, if not the first. Mårtensson’s agency is responsible for all Swedish military procurement.

The nation’s robust defense industrial base is a result of years of non-alliance policies, he told *National Defense* in Stockholm at the administration’s headquarters.

It strived for self-sufficiency, but also had to invest in its capacity

over the last 30 years as it increased exports.

“This is an advantage when it comes to the NATO membership because we can contribute of course with modern systems and our armed forces but also with a defense industry with a high technical knowledge level and a big production capacity in the country,” he said.

All over Western Europe, defense budgets are skyrocketing because of the Ukraine war. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s decision to push beyond Crimea in 2022 not only prompted Sweden and Finland to shed decades of officially being nonaligned and join NATO as full members but other nations to ramp up their military capabilities as well.

While the Swedish parliament is still working out the new defense budget, Mårtensson predicted the NATO policy of asking members to spend 2 percent of its GDP on defense “is just the floor.” From 2020 to 2024, Sweden has already doubled its defense budget, he noted.

In addition, lawmakers were readying a \$2.6 billion aid package to Ukraine, which they did deliver in late May.

Despite the post-World War II desire for self-sufficiency, Sweden today does rely on advanced weapon systems from other European nations, and particularly the United States, he noted.

But it is a two-way street. Saab in partnership with Boeing is providing the aft section of the new U.S. Air Force T-7 jet fighter trainer. BAE Systems Hägglunds is providing the

U.S. Army with the Beowulf BvS10 Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicle, and U.S. ground forces have been using the Carl Gustaf family of recoilless rifles and its ammunition — also produced by Saab — for decades.

Micael Johansson, president and CEO of Saab, said 60 to 70 percent of the company's profits now come from exports.

While Saab has always sold its wares to NATO customers — and adhered to the organization's technology standards to do so — there were already changes happening in the way his company does business only weeks after Sweden officially entered the alliance, he said in an interview.

Membership means being included in discussions on requirements and capabilities from which it had previously been shut out, he said.

"We are hopefully a reliable partner now, with industry potential that could be a powerful addition and lead to more sensitive development programs like electromagnetic warfare and command and control," he said.

"It's starting to happen as we speak now, which hasn't been the case before. So, I see a number of positive things in this," he said.

"It's super important in our region not to be an island in NATO territory," he added.

Hanna Olofsson, the Swedish Security and Defense Industry Association's chief of staff, said another of the nation's strengths is that — unlike several European nations — it privatized the entire defense industry and opened it up to foreign ownership, which forced it to compete for international contracts.

Olofsson said privatization and foreign ownership "has served our industrial base well, especially in terms of when the Swedish customer was not putting in the large type of orders, right. So, our companies have been forced to be competitive."

Ranking just behind Saab in terms of size are former Swedish defense firms that are now owned by BAE Systems — BAE Systems Hägglunds, which specializes in military vehicles such as the Beowulf BvS10, and BAE Systems Bofors, the maker of the Archer self-propelled howitzer, munitions and other armaments.

Johansson said many of Sweden's weapon systems are tailored for the Russian threat. For example, its submarines are specifically designed to operate in the Bal-

tic Sea, which is shallow and has a mix of fresh and salt water.

The use of conscripts in the armed forces to fill their ranks has also forced the nation to develop easy-to-use and easy-to-maintain weapon systems, he added. They are only in the military a short time, so learning how to use them needs a short learning curve.

Meanwhile, since Russia invaded Ukraine, there are a lot more companies joining the association with so-called "dual-use" applications, Olafsson added. They need assistance understanding the local and foreign markets and are seeking partnerships to tap into these funds, she added.

Mårtensson said: "I think we have to change a little bit in the system, which makes it easier for civilian companies to come into the community because we need it."

Another big change is that Norway, Sweden and Finland are all now part of NATO, along with other nations on the Baltic Sea including Poland, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

Military cooperation among the three Nordic nations — Finland, Sweden and Norway — has always been robust, but as far as their defense industries, it has not been as good, with Sweden and Finland generally cooperating more, but sources from both those nations pointing to Norway as being too protectionist.

Industrial cooperation "will increase dramatically. It has to," Johansson said.

"There will be collaboration going forward, even though we will continue to compete in certain areas," he added.

The other center of gravity in the region other than NATO is the European Union, which is becoming more involved in defense issues, said Niklas Alm, deputy secretary general of the Swedish Security and Defense Industry Association.

The European Defense Fund has \$8.6 billion to spend on military research and development and procurement and "collaborative capabilities" from 2021 to 2027, according to an EU fact sheet.

Norway is not a full member of the European Union but is aligned with it through the European Economic Area. Sweden, Finland and Norway

are all now part of the Nordic Council, the Arctic Council and NATO.

"This means that we can collaborate tighter, we can plan together and also [improve] operationally," Alm said.

Mårtensson said one area of cooperation is to boost capacity. "We need to increase the production capacity because it's not enough right now. And that is quite obvious when you're looking at when we're dealing with ammunition in the support to Ukraine," he said.

"We hope to triple the production of ammunition in the three Nordic countries," he said.

NATO membership will also strengthen the transatlantic relationship with the United Kingdom and the United States, he said.

The relationship with the United States is already strong. The association spends a great deal of time advising members on how to conquer the complex U.S. defense market, Olafsson said.

Saab has established a U.S.-operated subsidiary, Saab Inc., in the United States with all the appropriate firewalls to adhere to foreign ownership regulations.

"Some of our members do more business in the United States



BAE Systems Hägglunds' Beowulf BvS10 armored all-terrain vehicle

than Sweden," Olafsson said.

But so far, the relationship has been one way, Alm said. None of the major U.S.-based defense contractors have a presence in Sweden, he said.

But that will soon change. He has had almost weekly conversations with the members of the big five U.S. defense companies, and some of them are poised to set up offices in Stockholm.

Johansson said: "I would like to see U.S. companies establishing themselves here in the same way we establish ourselves in the United States so we can build capabilities."

That includes opening offices in Sweden, he said.

"And not only sales offices," he added. **ND**

Unwritten Chapters Await in Story of Baltic Sea

KARLSKRONA, Sweden — King Karl XI of Sweden in 1680 was growing ever frustrated that his navy was basically stuck in the north of the nation all winter due to the ice that covered the Baltic Sea.

Denmark — his main rival — enjoyed year-round access to its ports on the southern edge of the sea, giving it the upper hand to attack Sweden's territory just a few miles to the north.

The solution was relatively simple: establish a naval base in the nation's newly acquired and usually ice-free southern region protected by outlying islands where well-placed cannons could guard against any intrusions.



flowing to and from St. Petersburg that is funding Russia's campaign against its smaller neighbor. The enclave of Kaliningrad to the south is the Russian navy's only ice-free port on the sea and home to its Baltic Fleet.

The sea is roughly 120 miles wide, 995 miles long and has a surface area of about 150,000 square miles. Sweden alone has 267,570 islands and Finland more than 178,000.

Cmdr. Peter Östbring, Chief of Staff of the Royal Swedish Navy's 1st Submarine Flotilla, knows well the complexities of operating in the Baltic.

"The Baltic Sea might seem like a pretty small sea with not much going on," he told a group of U.S. and Canadian reporters during a briefing hosted by the Saab Kockums AB shipyard.

He showed a graphic of all the movement taking place daily on its waters, including numerous lines connecting Russia's ports to the North Sea. There is increasing shipping traffic since the war began and — stating a statistic of great importance to submarine operators — the noise level underwater during the past year has grown several decibels, he said.

But the operative word one keeps hearing about the Baltic is "shallow." Its average depth is only about 180 feet, and Sweden's fleet of four operational subs are optimally designed to sail in their waters.

And then there is a mix of salt water entering from the North Sea and fresh water flowing in from rivers.

The brackish water is both a blessing and a curse — but mostly a blessing, Östbring explained.

With increased salinity, the density in the water increases, and with increased density, the sound velocity increases.

"Sound will do tricky stuff," he said. "If there are different layers of different temperatures, salinity and pressure, they all affect how sound travels in water," he said. Sound travels slower in fresh water.

When hunting for submarines with an active sonar, the Swedish subs can hide behind the salt layers and send out their pings. However, there are hidden natural "sound channels" between the layers where the subs can place sensors

and hear all over the Baltic, he said.

Hiding behind salt layers is "super effective," he said, although the opposing subs can use the same tactics.

Mines are another challenge. There were an estimated 40,000 laid in the sea in World War I and World War II, and they're still out there and effective. Sometimes they break loose of their chains and wind up in fishing nets.

"It's a time-consuming task to clear those mines. And most of the mines built 100 years ago were super quality, because when we demolish them today, they still detonate with full force," Östbring said.

While Ukraine does not border the Baltic, Russia's invasion began a new chapter for the inland sea as both Finland and Sweden joined NATO as a direct result of Russian President Vladimir Putin's miscalculation.

The two newest members join Germany, Denmark, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia as NATO members on the Baltic, further isolating Russia.

The conflict has coined a new term "seabed warfare," after the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipeline attack. The pipeline was intended to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany, but yet-to-be identified saboteurs placed explosives on the pipeline Sept. 26, 2022, putting it out of commission.

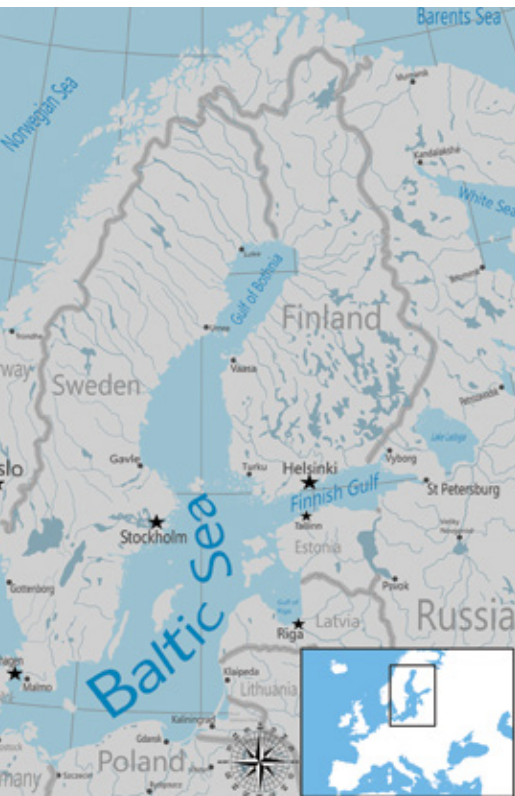
The incident, however, brought attention to global vulnerabilities in seabed infrastructure, which carries energy and communications all over the world.

Östbring said securing this infrastructure does not mean hanging around a pipeline or cable with a submarine like a guard dog.

"Seabed warfare is a fairly new concept," he said. "The learning curve is steep, and we are moving ahead quite fast to get more knowledgeable about it and create capabilities," he said. He reckoned that most nations were on the same learning curve.

Meanwhile, the number of Sweden's specialty submarines is poised to grow. There are three more in the shipyard in various stages of construction or overhaul.

They will create more capacity for NATO to take on Russia, if called upon. What role they will play in the Baltic Sea's next chapter remains to be seen. **ND**



He chose an island almost touching the mainland — dubbed it "Karlskrona" — and established a town, naval base and shipyard. All are still there.

The base's establishment was just one small chapter in the Baltic Sea's long history as a setting for ancient regional rivalries, two world wars and the Cold War.

Today, the Baltic Sea plays a key role in the Ukraine War, allowing safe passage for the oil and other goods

NATO Considering Arctic Air Operations Center to Counter Russia, China

BY LAURA HECKMANN

NATIONAL HARBOR, Maryland — Receding ice and open sea lanes have brought increased strategic importance to the Arctic, and Russia's presence in the region has led the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to consider new avenues to safeguard the Arctic air domain.

Gen. James Hecker, commander of U.S. Air Forces in Europe, said during a panel discussion at the Air & Space Forces Association's Air, Space & Cyber Conference Sept. 17 that Russia's presence in the Arctic is "concerning."

From its northern fleet of 55 ice-breakers, 37 surface vessels and eight nuclear submarines to its air presence and extended runways along its northern coast for long range bombers, Russia is "a pretty big threat," he said.

Hecker said Russia is increasing its domain awareness by adding radars and satellites "they haven't used before, so they're getting a lot more information in that domain, way up north, than they've had before. So that concerns us."

Lt. Gen. Case Cunningham, commander of Alaskan Command, U.S. Northern Command, said another concern with Russia in the Arctic is the access it can give to China, calling it the "most concerning thing."

In July, U.S. fighter jets intercepted a formation of Russian and Chinese bombers flying through the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone.

"Not only flying the combined bomber patrols — that was the eighth one that they've flown of late — but the first one in the Northcom [area of responsibility]. And then the second piece of that is that Russia is providing access to China. ... That access is significant," Cunningham said.

The number one deterrent against Russia in the Arctic is NATO, Hecker said — particularly its Nordic members. And as the threat from both Russia and the importance of the Arctic grow, the alliance is looking to add an additional Combined Air Operations Center, Hecker said.

"We're looking into that," he said. "We haven't started the initial operational capability, but we're seriously considering, and I have

[Gen. Christopher Cavoli, commander of U.S. European Command's approval to start looking at a third [Combined Air Operations Center] in NATO, and that CAOC is going to be in the Arctic region."

NATO currently has two Combined Air Operations Centers — one in Torrejón, Spain and one in Uedem, Germany. The centers are responsible for planning, directing, tasking, coordinating, supervising and supporting air operations of allocated assets in peace, crisis and conflict, NATO's website said.

Routinely they are tasked to execute NATO's Air Policing mission cooperating with Control and Reporting Centers, National Air Policing Centers and dedicated Quick Reaction Alert air bases across their respective area of regional responsibility.

Hecker said the experience "that we get from the Arctic nations up north is just invaluable, because although two of the nations haven't been in NATO the entire time, they've worked together all the time. ... So, we're going to exploit that close relationship between the Arctic nations and the knowledge that you bring to make that happen."

Maj. Gen. Øivind Gunnerud, chief of the Royal Norwegian Air Force, said during the panel that Norway would "welcome that. And I think it's important that by establishing a third CAOC, maybe we also will take some more regional responsibility. And I think it is also important when it comes to deterrence, and the development of Euro NATO, it's also to focus on the integrated air and missile defense, to strengthen those parts of it."

Maj. Gen. Jonas Wikman, air chief of the Swedish Air Force, said operating under the current circumstances, or "day zero," that the "ability to operate as you intend to fight from day zero is going to be really important for true deterrence. And we've been ... talking about that early, and I think that that has to affect how we organize day-to-day work."

Wikman said the Nordic countries already try to do that, but a third center in the Arctic would create the day-to-day operations on a national and regional level, "operating together to build that kind of culture and that kind of possibility to address the military problem in that region at day zero, and ... taking the fight as an alliance."

Hecker said a third center should be established in the Arctic "fairly shortly."

The panel also discussed information sharing as a critical piece of increasing domain awareness in the region and exploiting their partnerships against Russia.

NATO countries have "a lot of different capabilities ... and the two that just joined us have a lot more," Hecker said, referring to Sweden



and Finland. "And if we share that information, that's going to give us a lot more than we have, and we're already doing that, and we have agreements to even do it more."

In addition to increased information sharing between partners, Hecker said they are also exploring sending MQ-9s and Global Hawk unmanned aerial systems farther north into the Arctic Circle, "which we haven't done in the past," as well as using high-altitude balloons and high-altitude intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance drones. "We're exploring those avenues as well." **ND**



NATO to Adopt 'Overarching Russia Policy' at 2025 Summit BY ALLYSON PARK

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As the war in Ukraine and tensions in the Indo-Pacific region continue, NATO is looking to the future. The alliance will be adopting an “overarching Russia policy” at its 2025 summit, Mircea Geoană, deputy secretary general of NATO, said July 11.

Due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, a pattern of a “concerted policy of aggressiveness” from Russia has increased, including cyberattacks, espionage, sabotage, risks to critical alliance infrastructure, disinformation and misinformation. These hybrid attacks from Russia must be addressed by NATO as a whole instead of treating them as the member countries’ individually unique problems, Geoană said during the NATO Public Forum taking place in parallel with the alliance’s 75th Anniversary Summit in Washington, D.C.

“If you treat this individually — this is Lithuania’s problem or Germany’s problem [or] America’s problem — and we don’t inform each other through intelligence sharing and learning from each other, then our response would be basically segmented and less effective,” he said. “That’s why our leaders will approve later today, I think, also a special strategy of countering Russian malign influence in the Western Balkans, and across the alliance

we’re working to really push back and basically be far more effective.”

With hybrid attacks from countries like Russia, China, Iran and North Korea increasing, NATO is pivoting to refocus on collective defense. Geoană said by the next NATO summit in June 2025, which will be held at The Hague, the Netherlands, the alliance will be adopting an overarching Russia policy “that will be taking into account, basically, the pattern of aggressiveness [from] Russia against our interests, and the fact that Russia as a nation, as official ideology, as [an] economy, as defense of foreign policy, they are basically organizing themselves for the long haul to be aggressive against the West.”

He reiterated that NATO is a defense alliance that has “no aggressive intentions” against Russia, but action is more than necessary.

“They’re trying to portray NATO, America, the EU, whatever, as the big existential threat to Russia, which is total nonsense, just to justify a grip of power ... and together with other countries like China and the others to just to unravel the world order that we represent and embody through NATO,” he said.

The alliance must also strengthen existing global partnerships and create new partnerships with non-NATO countries in order to keep up with the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape. While NATO is not a

global organization, “security is global,” and increasing interoperability both within the alliance and with non-member countries grows increasingly important, Geoană said.

“We should really bring NATO and the EU even closer strategically, in using the respective [toolboxes] of the two organizations, we have to work with many of our partners,” he said. “There is something that our leaders and I myself, as a person with some experience in international affairs and politics in general, I think we have to do a much better job in reaching out to the other nations that are neither, let’s say, explicitly with us, nor with the other group of countries. And this is where we have to do a much better job together.”

While there is “a lot of work” to be done both internally in NATO and with other countries, Geoană said he is proud to see “how quickly we’re adjusting to this new reality, how we can sometimes avoid natural differences amongst allied nations, because it’s not easy to keep consensus in this alliance.”

“NATO is, today, the indispensable alliance, not only for our peace and security but also for global stability and predictability,” he said. “We are really the foundation of peace and everything you do with your lives ... because this is the foundation of peace and security, democracy and our way of life.” **ND**