

# Celebrates 60th Anniversary

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**O**n April 4, 1949, representatives from 12 European and North American nations met in Washington, D.C., and signed the North Atlantic Treaty, establishing what would come to be the most successful collective security alliance the world has ever known.

That day, the original 12 signatories pledged their determination to “safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples,

founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.” They further sought to “promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area” and resolved “to unite their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security.” Those precepts remain as valid today as they were in 1949. The continued fervor with which nations seek to join the alliance underscores the enduring merit of its purpose.





*The first session of the North Atlantic Council, held in Washington, D.C., on September 17, 1949, established the principles that have guided NATO ever since.*

For 60 years, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been a pillar of strength and force for peace and security in our world. It oversaw the extensive political and economic reconstruction of a European continent devastated by world war. It created an enduring transatlantic community based on common values and ideals. It prevailed in the Cold War, seeing a decades-long conflict come to a peaceful conclusion. It fostered the reunification of Germany, and by increasing membership it has extended democratic values throughout former Warsaw Pact countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It contributed to the resolution of conflict in the Balkans and the reintegration of that region into the whole of Europe.

Today NATO reaches around the globe to collectively confront the security challenges we face. The 21st-century NATO operates at strategic distance to address 21st-century challenges, ensuring our collective security, coping with turbulence in Europe and beyond, and putting in

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*On April 4, 1949, Dean Acheson, Secretary of State under President Harry S Truman (center), signs the NATO Treaty for the United States.*



*Above, the NATO Defence College, inaugurated in 1951 in Paris, was the brainchild of GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower. Right, with the signing of the Paris Agreements, the Federal Republic of Germany is invited to join NATO.*



place modern crisis-management capabilities to respond to challenges in an unpredictable world.

While NATO's 60th anniversary gives us occasion to celebrate and reflect on our successful past, it also presents an opportunity to look to the future and to define the role our alliance will have in advancing peace and prosperity in our world. NATO is and will remain an essential forum for member, partner and contact nations to consult on current challenges, assess the evolving security environment and strive for consensus to engage multilaterally in this complex world.

Today's NATO is not our parents' NATO; nor is it our sons and daughters' NATO. We have taken important steps to complete the transformation from a static, reactive alliance focused largely on territorial defense to an expedi-

tionary, flexible one that works with members and partners to deter and defeat the entire spectrum of threats confronting our collective security. Our transformational work is not finished, however; nor will it ever be. The security environment in which we operate is rapidly changing; our approach to engagement must mirror this tempo of change.

In this evolving security environment, crisis warning, identification, avoidance, management and resolution are security priorities for all nations. When NATO adopted a crisis-management role at the Brussels Summit in 1994, the alliance operated in a different time—a time of low operational tempo. Today the crisis-response mandate must compete with operational requirements for forces in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Iraq and on the Mediterranean Sea. Yet rapid response in times of crisis remains a critical alliance capability, and the NATO Response Force remains a key instrument of our military posture. Sustained support for this critical NATO crisis-response capability is absolutely essential.



*In 1950, GEN Eisenhower was appointed NATO's first Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).*

The current global financial crisis presents nations with difficult choices to make in allocating scarce resources. Across the alliance, security demands are on the rise while defense spending is on the decline. We must find new and innovative ways to transform our militaries and deliver increasingly expeditionary capabilities. Commonly owned and operated assets could go a long way toward bringing the alliance the capabilities it needs. In addition, NATO must expand partnership efforts to generate greater effects and realize much-needed efficiencies. NATO and the European Union have 21 common members, are founded on common values and ideals, and have a wide array of complementary capabilities. We must increase our efforts to effectively partner with one another—operationally as well as politically. In the end, we must remember that a proactive approach to security is much less expensive than a reactive one.

As NATO celebrates its 60th anniversary, some will call into question its relevance in the current security environment. Is NATO a Cold War relic, an anachronism that



*President-elect John F. Kennedy visits the NATO Council in Paris on January 7, 1961, as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union escalate.*

should step aside, making way for new organizations to enter into the security arena? It is not: NATO demonstrates its relevance in today's security environment each and every day—on the ground and in the skies above Afghanistan, on the streets of Kosovo, in training centers in Iraq, on the sea throughout the Mediterranean and in the skies over the Baltic states. In these locations and elsewhere, more than 60,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines from more than 40 NATO nations and non-NATO partner nations stand alongside one another confronting today's security chal-

lenges. Ours is an alliance that is redefining itself and shaping the global security environment to safeguard the freedom of our citizens and increase security around the world.

Transnational terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, climate change, energy security, mass migrations and cyber attacks are just a few of the many threats to collective security in our globalized world that do not stop at national borders and cannot be successfully addressed by any one nation alone. Today's transnational challenges necessitate comprehensive international solutions, which are made possible only through partnership, cooperation and dialogue, the very tenets by which NATO operates. NATO, alongside other cooperative institutions, is essential to security in our world.

Maintaining an alliance of 26 nations (soon to be 28), each with its own national interests, consensus and resolution to action, requires effort—sometimes extraordinary effort. The member nations don't always see the threats, or the ways and means to confront those threats, in the same way. The clear and present danger that was the Soviet Union no longer stands in wait on the other side of the Fulda Gap. Our shared values and ideals remain firm and motivate resolution of our differences, however. Members recognize that today's security problems are complex, transcend national borders and demand a cooperative, comprehensive approach that is achieved through constructive debate and dialogue.

Indeed, member nations don't always agree. Not only is this the nature of an alliance, in many ways it is a strength of an alliance. With varying perspectives and a system of consensus, we can be certain our conclusions will be well-reasoned, and when we do undertake action, we do so with a high degree of legitimacy attached. Disagreement is nothing new; NATO nations have debated, argued and



*In 1984, President Ronald Reagan (center left) and NATO Secretary General J. Luns (center right) discuss East-West relations at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Washington, D.C.*

*President Bill Clinton leads NATO heads of state through the courtyard of the International Trade Center during the NATO 50th Anniversary Summit in Washington in April 1999.*



*President George W. Bush addresses the NATO summit meeting in Bucharest, Romania, in April 2008. U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown is on the President's right.*



*GEN Bantz J. Craddock, SACEUR*

disagreed for decades. The speed and reach of communications in the 21st century, however, make the discussion appear louder and more profound than it was previously.

Winston Churchill once said, “You can always count on Americans to do the right thing, after they’ve tried everything else.” Charles de Gaulle mirrored the sentiment, saying, “You may be sure that the Americans will commit all the stupidities they can think of, plus some that are beyond imagination.” The negative sentiment wasn’t exclusively directed at Americans; de Gaulle also said, “When I am right, I get angry. Churchill gets angry when he is wrong. So we were often angry at each other.”

We’ve had our disagreements: the Suez Crisis during the 1950s, the French military withdrawal from NATO in the ‘60s, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the ‘70s, Pershing II missile fielding as well as the gas pipeline between the Soviet Union and Europe in the ‘80s, the Balkans in the ‘90s and Iraq in 2003. All have drawn comments that the alliance is irrelevant or on the brink of collapse. This is no truer today than it proved to be at each of those points in history. In disagreement, we have demonstrated our belief in democracy and in the value of intelligent debate, repeatedly proving the strength and worth of our alliance. In the face of differences that some purport to be the undoing of NATO, the alliance is currently deployed in diverse and demanding operations on three continents. Nations across Europe are striving for membership, and France is working to renew its relationship, advocating full participation in alliance structures. These are not indicators of obsolescence or irrelevance, but rather of an alliance that has become the gold standard for security in our complex world.

NATO is flourishing. For 60 years, the NATO alliance has signified peace and prosperity for our members and partners. Those who preceded us created and sustained that legacy; it is now our responsibility to do the same for those who follow. In celebrating its 60th anniversary, I congratulate NATO on its glorious past, its essential present and its bright future. ★