

In advance of the arrival of Secretary Rice and other Alliance Foreign Ministers for NATO meetings, Ambassador Nuland responded today to questions from webchat participants in the U.S. and Europe on NATO member contributions to operations, burden sharing, the NATO Response Force, missile defense, Kosovo, the progress of Albania and Macedonia in their aspirations for NATO membership, and the benefits of partnership and membership for Serbia and other countries. The conversation provided a useful overview to the public of some of the topics that the Foreign Ministers will discuss in their formal meetings on December 7.

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12-05-2007 09:31:09

Victoria Nuland: Thank you for joining me today on this State Department web chat. We're having a busy day at NATO Headquarters as we prepare for meetings tomorrow and Friday of Alliance Foreign Ministers, including my boss, Secretary Rice. They'll be discussing NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and preparing for the April Summit of Heads of State and Government and possible decisions there to further enlarge the Alliance. They will also meet with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in the 27-nation NATO-Russia Council, and with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania at a lunch for Mediterranean partners. There will also be a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

With missions on three continents and partners from all over the world, NATO is an exciting and challenging place to work. I look forward to talking to you about it today.
12-05-2007 09:42:28

Joel: Burden sharing has been an enduring issue within NATO. My question concerns burden sharing by new member states. Specifically, are new member states sharing burdens on an equitable level with the original 16? In particular, as we look at contributions to NATO missions in Afghanistan, are these new members providing sufficient troops with adequate capabilities (including minimal operational constraints)? If so, why do they do so when other members of longer standing are not fully contributing or constraining their forces' contributions? Thank you for answering this question and for your service.

Victoria Nuland: You are right, Joel, that NATO has always struggled to ensure that the burden is shared equally among Allies, particularly in our peacekeeping and stability operations like Kosovo and Afghanistan.

We have been impressed by the commitment of all our new Allies to bring as much as they can to the table. Some countries are really punching above their weight class, like Lithuania, which runs its own Provincial Reconstruction team in Ghor Province in Afghanistan. But overall we are concerned that defense budgets are declining across Europe at a time when the world needs more peacekeepers, more deployable capability for places like Afghanistan.

So we are encouraging all our Allies to stop the slide in security spending, invest today in their armed forces and bring as much as they can to our collective efforts to promote peace and stability in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, and in NATO's training missions. The NATO Treaty, written in 1949, speaks about "shared risk and shared responsibility" as a founding principle of the Alliance -- we need that commitment as much today as we did in 1949.

12-05-2007 09:47:26

ctk: At what stage are the current negotiations between USA and NATO regarding the involvement of NATO into the missile defence shield ? What do you expect in this respect from summit NATO in Bucharest ?

Victoria Nuland: Now that the US has offered to share the benefits of our long-range missile defense system with all Allies, we have reoriented the work in NATO to look at the remaining short and medium range missile threat to Alliance populations and territory.

We hope by the next NATO Summit in Bucharest in April to offer Heads of State and Government ideas on how NATO could ensure all Allies are completely covered against a missile threat from Iran or elsewhere in that region, and how a NATO system and the US system could be linked. We are also continuing our outreach to Russia to try to encourage Moscow to join us in building a joint missile defense architecture which protects the US, all NATO allies and Russia.

12-05-2007 09:50:22

Moderator: Participants may wish to review the following document: [Proposed U.S. Missile Defense Assets in Europe](#)

12-05-2007 09:53:47

Jelena Petkovic: Dear Ms Nulend, thank you for making possible to ask you few questions.

What are the NATO and US plans to keep the peace in the region, in case of UDI of Kosovo? Does NATO have plans to protect Serbs in the province?

Jelena Petkovicjournalist of daily "Vesti"Belgrade

Victoria Nuland: We expect Secretary Rice and her NATO Foreign Minister counterparts to talk alot about Kosovo tomorrow and Friday. As you know, NATO has more than 16 thousand troops in Kosovo, keeping the peace there and working with Kosovar authorities and the UN to safeguard the rights of all people living there, including the Serb minority. This role will continue, as will our TransAtlantic effort to ensure that Kosovo authorities live up to their responsibilities to protect minority rights and property.

Our goal is a secure, stable, democratic multi-ethnic Kosovo, living at peace with its

neighbors. NATO has been committed to this since 1999, and we will stick with it, no matter how the final status issues are settled. 12-05-2007 09:55:34

Moderator: Welcome to those of you just joining us. We see your questions coming in, thank you. Questions appear on this screen only after they are answered by Ambassador Nuland. 12-05-2007 09:59:49

Sanja : The questions for Ambassador Victoria Nuland

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- The members of the Contact Group's troika voiced different ideas on how the process of resolving Kosovo's status will unfold after their report is submitted to the U.N. on Dec.10. What do you expect to happen?

Victoria Nuland: We owe it to the Troika negotiators and the parties -- Pristina and Belgrade --to wait until the final report of the Troika is submitted to the UN and UNSC member states have a chance to discuss it later this month before we start making predictions. We're hopeful that even if the Troika does not succeed in settling the matter, they'll give all of us sound guidance to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage.

In the meantime, we welcome the strong commitment by both Pristina and Belgrade to ensure calm during this period, and to refrain from violence. NATO and our KFOR forces are there and will respond resolutely to any attempts to disrupt peace and security. 12-05-2007 10:09:06

Chat Participant: What are Macedonia's realistic chances of being invited to join NATO in April 2008? Can Greece veto its' entry because of its name?

Thank you,

Metodija A. Koloski
President, United Macedonian Diaspora

Victoria Nuland: Metodija, I was in Skopje about a month ago with officials from Washington to encourage the government and the parliament to pick up the pace in implementing the Ohrid Framework agreement and the May 29 agreement to strengthen Macedonia's multi-ethnic democracy. We also urged more attention to judicial reform and combatting crime and corruption.

Since then, I'm pleased to see that vital legislation has started moving again in the parliament, and different political parties are making the compromises necessary to demonstrate political maturity and a strong democracy. Those efforts must continue to put Macedonia in the best possible position when NATO Heads of State look at whom to invite next year. All 26 Allied countries, including Greece, have to agree that Macedonia is ready in order for NATO to issue an invitation. That is among the reasons why we are urging Macedonians and Greeks to work hard to resolve remaining points of friction, and

to engage actively now in the UN negotiations to solve the name issue. 12-05-2007
10:15:55

Gazeta Shqiptare2: Hello, my name is Anila Basha and I'm from Albania, Gazeta Shqiptare.

I have a clear question: After your visit in Albania, how do you see the reforms in our country towards NATO membership? Do you think it will be a invitation for Albania in the next Nato's summit (Bucharest)? And if you have a clear opinion, it will be a personal invitation for Albania, or with the other states, Croatia and Macedonia?

The second: When we will have in the region a new state of Kosovo? Are you expecting something from the negociaton between Pristina and Beograd? What are the expectation for the situation in western balkans after that?

thank you

Victoria Nuland: Anila, I am impressed with the hard work that Albanians have been doing to combat crime and corruption, and strengthen the rule of law. These efforts need to continue, along with measures to improve the conditions for free and fair elections.

But Albanians can't relax -- you have to sprint to the finish and keep taking the steps to demonstrate to all Allies that your democracy is maturing, that rule of law is taking hold and that all citizens are equal in politics, business and society. Each of the three Adriatic countries will be judged individually so Albania needs to keep working hard. I talked about Kosovo with another participant. Albania has a special role to play as a good neighbor of Kosovo in encouraging calm and patience there as the UN process plays out.
12-05-2007 10:27:02

Jelena Petkovic: What would Serbia get by joining NATO and what would be the cost for Serbian government to do so?

Jelena Petkovicjournalist of daily "Vesti"Belgrade

Victoria Nuland: Jelena, thanks for that great question.

First, let me stress that NATO does not go out and recruit new members. It is a sovereign decision of states in the Euro-Atlantic area to decide whether or not NATO membership is for them. It is a very, very serious decision because it involves real benefits but also real responsibilities. NATO members pledge under Article 5 of the Treaty to come to each others defense. So a NATO aspirant country has to be ready not simply to benefit from that security guarantee but to honor it if another Ally's security is threatened.

That said, each Ally makes its own decision about how to contribute to NATO mission and operations, whether and where it can send troops and trainers, etcetera. In terms of costs, NATO members are urged to spend at least two percent of their GDP on defense, and to contribute as generously as they can to our collective efforts. NATO members also

get a seat at the table in deciding what NATO will do and say, and where it will commit itself. This is distinct from the role of NATO partners, who don't sit on the "governing board" of the Alliance but can benefit from the security training opportunities, political consultations, exercises, seminars and schools that NATO opens to all its partners. As a Partnership for Peace country, Serbia can benefit from all these NATO partnership tools today. 12-05-2007 10:35:05

Joel: Joel: I appreciate the response to my earlier question. If time permits, could you discuss any possible changes to the NATO Reaction Force? Is there any discussion of increasing the level of common funding when the NRF is deployed, as it was in Pakistan? This could encourage greater support for the NRF.

Victoria Nuland: Thanks for asking about the NATO Response Force, Joel. For our readers who don't know about the NRF, it is NATO's rapid reaction force of about 25 thousand troops which we keep at the ready and trained for security emergencies. NATO has used it twice -- once several years ago to add additional security forces in Afghanistan for the election period there, and a second time to provide humanitarian assistance to Pakistan after the 2005 earthquake.

Given how many troops Allies have in our missions now -- not only in Afghanistan and Kosovo but also in UN sanctioned missions in Lebanon, Africa and Iraq -- it has been a struggle to keep the NRF at full strength too. We are looking at ways to ensure we have the essential forces necessary for all contingencies and to increase common funding of NRF missions to protect the principle of burden sharing among Allies.
12-05-2007 10:37:33

Victoria Nuland: Thanks to everyone who participated today and for your challenging questions. It's been fun and I look forward to doing it again soon -- after I get my boss out of town, that is. Keep supporting our great Alliance.