

The Road to Warsaw and Beyond

**Speech by General Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military
Committee**

**to NATO Parliamentary Assembly Defence and Security
Committee**

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Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am honored today to have the opportunity to address you during your 61st Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. As members of the Defence and Security Committee, you are well aware of the key issues facing the Alliance and our world, but I would like to share our time together today adding some thoughts for your discussions.

This morning, as part of “The Road to Warsaw and Beyond”, I will focus on three main areas. I will begin with an introduction of my role in NATO. I will then describe our contemporary operating environment- that is to say, a brief description of the things that have and have not changed in the recent past. And lastly, I will conclude with what we are doing, or can do beyond Warsaw.

To begin, some of you may be wondering exactly what it is that the Chairman of the Military Committee does, and how this

role relates to other military officers in the Alliance with whom you've interacted or those you may have met even from your own nations.

The CMC is NATO's senior military officer, serving as the principal military advisor to the Secretary General. My role is to serve as the conduit through which consensus-based advice from NATO's 28 Chiefs of Defence is brought forward to the political decision-making bodies of NATO. So, to translate, what I really do is work with the 28 MILREPs, 28 PERMREPs, and 28 Chiefs of Defence in NATO to help them all working together to provide the military perspective and advice the Alliance needs.

Additionally, I also serve as a link, not the boss, between Brussels, SACEUR, and SACT, with the goal of ensuring seamless military guidance and support across the Alliance. As an example, I strive to ensure that the political leaders' guidance from Brussels is translated into clear tasks to our strategic commanders, and I try to ensure that the strategic commanders' requirements are communicated and that I reinforce those requests in Brussels.

So, with that said, NEXT, I hope to share with you my thoughts on the contemporary operating environment we now face.

In order to discuss the current situation, I believe it is best to highlight those things that have NOT changed, and then those things that have. So, first and foremost, what has not changed- NATO remains the most powerful and reliable alliance the world has ever known. Secondly, the overarching core values and missions of the Alliance have NOT changed.

As highlighted in the 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO continues to serve as an Alliance of 28 nations committed to the Collective Defence of all 28 Allies. NATO's fundamental and enduring purpose has not changed- we are committed to the defence of the freedom and security of all of the Alliance's members by political and military means. We remain an Alliance of 28 for 28, 24/7, with a 360 degree view. That view includes our ability, in addition to Collective Defence, to conduct Crisis Response and Cooperative Security.

We live in a modern security environment that contains, according to the Strategic Concept, a "broad and evolving set of challenges". Recently, the 28 CHODs met in Istanbul and they asked that NATO continue to provide a pro-active, versatile, and flexible military arm, available to the Alliance whenever and wherever called upon. In fact, this has not changed. What has changed, however, is the strategic environment, that arena that the Strategic Concept referred to as "evolving".

Well, evolve it has. There has been a constant drumbeat of significant developments in the global security situation over the last couple of years. In late 2013, we saw the genesis of a changed security environment. As political forces and citizens in Ukraine struggled with the decision of whether or not to more closely align with Europe, the ships sunk in the Mediterranean resulting in the deaths of thousands of migrants. These two events were indicators that our contemporary security situation would soon drastically change, resulting in the most complex, unpredictable, and challenging security situation Europe has seen in decades.

Many of you are well-versed in the particular aspects of the ongoing Ukrainian crisis and the current refugee situation. But, I would submit to you, that we now live in an age of unpredictability and dynamic instability. We are all well aware that NATO now faces two distinct security challenges, the East and the South, where Russia is a common denominator in both. There is an arc of instability surrounding much of the Alliance.

The Eastern security challenge is dominated by a revanchist Russia, cyber attacks, and hybrid warfare. We believe that Russia's strategic objectives are to restore her great power status and to strengthen her influence in the Soviet successor

states, or “near abroad”. In an effort to strengthen or expand her political and military sphere of influence, Russia has become a source of regional instability.

Our relationship with Russia is both complicated and multifaceted. A number of common interests exist between the Alliance and Russia, as well as our individual countries and Russia. This complexity is a reality of our contemporary strategic environment and demands a sophisticated and pragmatic approach- one that acknowledges Russian aims to undermine Alliance cohesion by dividing Allies and fomenting disunity, thereby rebalancing power and status. In the face of this changing situation, I cannot stress enough the importance of unity.

But we must also remember that this arc of instability includes more than just Ukraine and refugees from the south. For example, fighting in Yemen is fast becoming a regional conflict, with potential spillover implications. The ongoing situation in Syria and the most recent Russian actions create implications for many in the Alliance- from refugees fleeing the affected areas towards Europe’s shores to airspace and ground combat coordination and deconfliction on the borders of the Alliance.

The confluence of these two, apparently distinct challenges in the vicinity of NATO's collective borders, gives rise to even more complicated challenges. What are the implications of Russia's actions in Syria? It is apparent that they have significantly broadened the conflict from a regional to a global issue. Russia is continuing to exploit every opportunity to further their strategic and operational aims.

Russia's aims in the Mediterranean may be limited to promoting and protecting the Assad regime and the Syrian client state. But, what concerns NATO's military authorities is that perhaps, her goals are much more strategic. Perhaps Russia is ensuring unfettered access to the eastern Mediterranean that emulates her substantial anti-access/area denial capabilities in Kaliningrad and now in Crimea.

We, as leaders and thinkers in NATO, must avoid becoming lost in tactical events. An airspace violation is a tactical event. Repositioning forces is a tactical event. Are these pragmatic singular actions with immediately apparent goals, or are they part of a larger strategy? We must take the time to listen to the messages, in their varying forms, from Russia, to analyse them, and determine their overarching aims. Only then can NATO properly anticipate, and if needed, respond.

In order to respond properly, the Alliance must remain cohesive. Only by speaking with one voice can NATO act properly and efficiently, whether politically or militarily to threats in this new age of uncertainty.

Lastly, I would like to share with you what we are doing in the run up to the Warsaw Summit, and what we can do beyond Warsaw. The Readiness Action Plan, or RAP is just the first step in adapting the Alliance for the challenges of the 21st century. The RAP will be ready for Warsaw, ensuring NATO is ready to deter any threat in this arc of instability. Though perhaps, the RAP is an operational tool designed to allow us the strategic flexibility and time to permit deeper adaptation. We should look beyond Warsaw with the aim transforming NATO to be adaptable by design.

The RAP answers the call for a responsive deterrent. It is also an assurance measure, if underpinned by effective Strategic Communication, or STRATCOM. The SEC GEN has recently asked the Military Committee and National Military Authorities to conduct various tasks, such as sustaining Assurance Measures through the development of a long-term rotation plan. He also has asked us to be more regionally aware in order to counter hybrid threats. He also asked us to increase our situational awareness in peacetime in all directions.

Deterrence is achieved by having the political will, timely decision-making mechanisms, and interoperable forces ready to deploy to support the Alliance. Demonstrating this will, these mechanisms, and these forces is both a deterrent and an Assurance Measure. However, WE need to communicate these three components. Our ability to explain our collective political will, timely decision-making mechanisms, and interoperable forces is crucial to ensuring the citizens of each NATO country have the understanding, thus assurance, of NATO.

Another key component is cooperation. Working with our partners throughout the globe is yet another way that NATO can promote mutual trust, regional understanding, and situational awareness. NATO has a wide framework of existing channels for this type of cooperation to include the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and the Mediterranean Dialogue, just to name two. Other links, such as the Enhanced Opportunities Partners Initiative and the Defence Capacity Building Programme, are also crucial.

These cooperative frameworks can allow NATO to grow greater relationships and understanding for future operations. These initiatives, to include exercises and training can project stability, limiting potential crises. As we move forward beyond Warsaw,

we will develop a robust, renewed comprehensive engagement strategy to ensure that we are projecting stability beyond our NATO borders to avoid future crises.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank you for our time together. I hope that my characterization of our contemporary operating environment- that is to say, our new age of unpredictability- will be helpful to your work. I also hope that my explanations of what NATO is doing, such as the RAP, adaptation, and cooperation were beneficial. But more importantly, I am optimistic about what we can do beyond Warsaw, namely ensuring that NATO is adaptable by design, and that effective assurance comes when a credible deterrent – which is a combination of the political will, speedy mechanisms, and able forces – is exercised and communicated to our citizens to get their trust and support.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your time.

I am happy to answer your questions.