



Observatory

NATO News & Opinion Clips

No.9 – May 2010

Welcome to NATO Watch's monthly *Observatory*. Our focus is on NATO policy-making and operational activities and the clips are drawn from a wide range of subscriptions, feeds and alerts covering a substantial part of the major English language newspapers and other periodicals worldwide. If you are short on time – go straight to the recommended reading, marked ♣♣

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Quote – Unquote:

(photo credit: [reway2007/flickr](#))

Removing aging tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, the last archaic symbols of the Cold War, provides NATO an opportunity to boldly demonstrate a new vision of Trans-Atlantic security

Lt. Col. Michael Byrne, CDR Douglas Edson and Lt. Col. Andrea Hlosek, [A Nuclear Weapons Free NATO](#), *American Diplomacy*, 26 April



I do believe that the presence of American nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential part of a credible deterrent

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, [Press Conference](#), Tallinn, 23 April

the next round of negotiations with Russia should not focus solely on nuclear disarmament issues. These talks should encompass missile defense, Russia's relations with NATO, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, North Korea, Iran and Asian security issues.

William Perry and George Shultz, [New York Times](#), 10 April

Democratic Russia has never given cause for Baltic or Eastern European states to tremble over their sovereignty or security, despite NATO's attempts to portray Russia as an enemy threatening to attack in the dead of night

Dmitry Rogozin Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to NATO, [Letter](#), *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2010

If you're an average American taxpayer, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have, since 2001, cost you personally \$7,334. They have cost all Americans collectively more than \$980,000,000,000. As a country, the United States will pass the trillion dollar mark soon.

“cost of war” counter created by the [National Priorities Project](#) (NPP)

I recently suggested publicly that we needed to work more closely with NGOs, so that their “soft power” could complement our hard power. Their reaction, I can tell you, was not very receptive.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, [speech](#) at the University of Chicago, 8 April

Military training is fundamentally an exercise in overcoming a fear of killing another human

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, author of the book “On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society,” quoted in *New York Times*, [Psychologists Explain Iraq Airstrike Video](#), 7 April

If such an incident took place in America, even if an animal were killed like this, what would they do?

The father of the 22-year-old Reuters photographer Namir Noor-Eldeen killed in a July 2007 airstrike in Iraq, [quoted](#) in *New York Times*, 6 April

NATO Watch Feature Articles:

NATO nuclear reform off the menu in Tallinn

But case made for ‘nuclear sharing’ by Clinton and Rasmussen unlikely to close down debate or convince critics at NPT review conference

Ian Davis, director NATO Watch

Arms control has made a welcome return to the international agenda. While the recent US-Russian ‘New Start’ Treaty and Obama’s Nuclear Summit grabbed the headlines, several NATO member states have been engaged in intensive internal discussions about Alliance nuclear policy. Five NATO nations — Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway and Luxembourg — have been pressing for the Alliance to look again at its nuclear posture and specifically the continued presence of an estimated 200 US short-range battlefield or ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons (TNWs)

stationed with US and allied air forces in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey.

Other NATO allies have indicated that they support the nuclear status quo for the (now largely symbolic) 'nuclear sharing' principles, to prevent nuclear proliferation within NATO and/or as a hedge against a resurgent Russia. At the Foreign Ministers meeting in Tallinn, Estonia on 22-23 April these differences were subject to multilateral discussions at ministerial level for the first time in over a decade.

The US and the Soviet Union amassed thousands of these smaller, more portable TNWs during the Cold War. Over the years, the numbers of US forward-deployed TNWs have declined to about 200 in five different European countries (from a Cold-War era deployment of around 8,000 bombs), while the Russians have [retained](#) at least 2,000 deployed weapons, and perhaps another 2-3,000 in reserve (down from more than 23,000 Soviet-era weapons). The Russian reluctance to reduce its TNW arsenal further is largely due to a belief in the Kremlin that the weapons are necessary to compensate for NATO's conventional military superiority – in effect a reversal of the Cold War nuclear and conventional inventories (although the former Soviet conventional forces had nothing like the conventional superiority of NATO today).

Given President Obama's interest in nuclear disarmament, many arms control advocates, as well as several European leaders, hoped that the US administration would commit to reducing these weapons in Europe at the [NATO Foreign Ministers meeting](#) in Estonia. The fact that it was the Foreign Ministers discussing these weapons and their security role, rather than the more hawkish Defence Ministers and officials within the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, initially gave grounds for cautious optimism.



Gen. Roger Brady, USAFE Commander, is shown B61 nuclear weapon disarming procedures on a "dummy" in an underground Weapons Security and Storage System (WS3) vault at Volkel Air Base, Netherlands in June 2008 - photo credit: US Air Force, via [FAS](#)

However, rather than signal a welcome change two of the key players—Secretary of State Clinton and NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen—made decisive interventions on behalf of the status quo and in so doing revealed a continuation of outdated Cold War mindsets at the heart of the Alliance. To show that this is no idle claim it is worth examining what they both said in detail.

In his [remarks](#) on 19 April in advance of the meeting in Tallinn, Rasmussen said:

No decision will be taken in Tallinn on NATO's nuclear policy, but I do think the principles of the NATO discussion are already clear: first, that no Ally will take unilateral decisions; second, that as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO will need a nuclear deterrent



"On Alliance Solidarity in the 21st century" - Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Tallin, 22 April – photo credit: NATO

In a [speech](#) in Tallinn on 22 April Rasmussen further elaborated:

What we also need is a credible nuclear deterrent. We should work towards a world without nuclear weapons. I share that great vision.

But we must retain a nuclear capability as long as there are rogue regimes or terrorist groupings that may pose a nuclear threat to us.

And at a [press conference](#) later that day, in response to a specific question on TNWs in Europe, he added:

I do believe that the presence of American nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential part of a credible deterrent

Having argued for a 'credible nuclear deterrent' almost in the same breath as endorsing the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, the NATO Secretary General goes on to apply a rationale for nuclear weapons that is straight out of the former Bush Administration's Nuclear Posture Review: to deter (and presumably pre-empt or punish) terrorists and 'rogue regimes'. Many former Cold War advocates of 'nuclear deterrence theory' have questioned its continuing relevance or longevity in a multi-polar post-cold war environment, even in a state-to-state conflict, but few if any have made a credible case for nuclear

deterrence against non-state actors. And even in relation to 'rogue regimes', code for Iran and North Korea, it is doubtful whether the old MAD rules (based on rational actions by state leaders on both sides) would apply.

However, even if one accepts the need for a continuation of 'nuclear deterrence' within NATO – itself a contentious assumption – the Secretary General is on even thinner ice when he claims it is "essential" that it include "American nuclear weapons in Europe". In short, not only does the more general policy of extended deterrence serve the same purpose, it does so with (strategic nuclear) weapons that are far less vulnerable to diversion or theft by terrorists. When asked at a [recent briefing in Washington](#) if there is a military mission performed by the aircraft-delivered TNWs that cannot be performed by either US strategic or conventional forces, Vice-Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Cartwright, simply replied "No".

Moreover, in equating TNWs in Europe with assurances of security to former Soviet bloc states that are now part of NATO, the Secretary General is in danger of undermining the credibility of the Article 5 guarantees that he rightly holds so dear. It would seem the penny has yet to drop at NATO HQ that tactical nuclear weapons are not a "credible" weapon as a guarantor of freedom and a deterrent against non-nuclear threats or Russian bullying. The destructive effects are too massive to justify their use against cyber attacks, energy blackmail and other largely non-military threats and this makes them a security liability rather than an asset.

And Rasmussen rather undermines his belief that "no Ally will take unilateral decisions" when he pre-empts the outcome of the Tallinn discussion and indeed the Strategic Concept review by declaring (albeit in what he qualifies as 'personal remarks'): "the presence of American nuclear weapons in Europe is an essential part of a credible nuclear deterrent". Whether this principle applied to earlier decisions made (as far as we can tell, since they are secret) on a unilateral or bilateral basis to withdraw US nuclear weapons from the UK and Greece, and to consolidate TNWs at fewer bases, remains an open question.



North Atlantic Council Working Dinner: US Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton (left) and NATO Deputy Secretary General Claudio Bisogniero (right) – photo credit: NATO

At a dinner with fellow NATO Foreign Ministers in Tallinn, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's [reported remarks](#) (which have not been made

public) suggest that the NATO debate on the future of nuclear weapons should be guided by five principles:

- As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance;
- As a nuclear alliance, sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities widely is fundamental;
- A broad aim is to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons – while recognizing that in the years since the Cold War ended, NATO has already dramatically reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons;
- Allies must broaden deterrence against the range of 21st century threats, including by pursuing territorial missile defence, strengthening Article V training and exercises, and drafting additional contingency plans to counter new threats; and
- In any future reductions, the aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on TNWs in Europe, relocate them away from the territory of NATO members, and include them in the next round of US-Russian arms control discussions.

While the Obama administration deserves credit for making it clear that the next round of US-Russian nuclear arms talks should address tactical as well as strategic nuclear weapons, the proposed linking of the withdrawal of US forward deployed nuclear weapons to action by Russia on its far larger tactical nuclear arsenal is a recipe for inaction and stalemate. In short, while TNWs could and should be covered by the next round of US-Russian talks it does not preclude a decision by NATO to return the US nuclear weapons across the Atlantic – or for either (and preferably both) Russia and NATO to publish full inventories of their TNW stockpiles.



NATO Spokesman James Appathurai during his briefing to the press – photo credit: NATO

Indeed, during the subsequent [press briefing](#) NATO spokesman James Appathurai appeared to take a softer line when pressed on whether any US or NATO reductions were dependent on reciprocal Russian moves:

I did not say that there would be no moves without the Russians. I did say that Russia had to be taken into account when looking at the broader issue of reducing the total

holdings of nuclear weapons in Europe. So a big distinction.

What Rasmussen, Clinton and the other NATO ministers and officials appear unwilling to acknowledge in public, however, is that the remaining US tactical bombs in Europe have no military role in the defence of NATO and that their negotiating leverage with the Russians is minimal or non-existent. As such they are an obstacle rather than a bargaining chip towards the goal of consolidating and eliminating Russian and US TNWs. Russia has consistently said that it would not start eliminating or withdrawing its remaining TNWs until Washington removes its bombs from Europe.

And if a key concern of NATO Foreign Ministers is to retain a semblance of 'nuclear sharing', how can a handful of countries involved in the nuclear strike mission possibly be "sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities widely" in an alliance with 28 countries? All countries are in the Nuclear Planning Group, regardless of whether they have nuclear weapons on their territory or have the NATO nuclear strike mission. As Martin Butcher, *NATO Monitor*, reports:

The Alliance has 28 members. Three are nuclear weapons states with their own arsenals. Four other states participate in NATO sharing programmes – The Netherlands, Belgium, German and Italy – and their air forces are equipped and trained for nuclear missions. In addition, Turkey has US weapons based on its soil.

This hardly represents a broad sharing of the nuclear burden. Less than 1/3^d of NATO nations have any direct involvement in nuclear defence. More than 2/3rds of NATO members turn up for the NPG once a year and rely on the US nuclear umbrella for their defence.

If this is so important to NATO, why is it so little discussed and why do so few participate?

Moreover, Clinton's argument that nuclear sharing could only end if the Alliance is no longer a "nuclear" Alliance seems at odds with the promise in the US Nuclear Posture Review to "keep open all options" on the future of nuclear sharing. On the other hand, in his [closing press conference](#) on the second day at Tallinn, when pressed to explain further whether this 'broad sharing' meant that all the allies that now have weapons on their soil in Europe have to keep them in order to share the responsibilities, NATO Secretary General Rasmussen did appear to leave the door slightly ajar:

Well, that's, of course, part of our discussion from now until November. The important thing is that all allies agree that no one will take unilateral steps. We will move together. We will keep Alliance unity. That's the most important thing. Within that framework, of course, we can have and will have an open discussion how can we make our deterrence policy as credible and as efficient as possible.

Clinton and Rasmussen are right, however, to focus on broadening deterrence against the range of new threats, especially as means of providing reassurance on collective defence to the Baltic states and others within the Alliance with specific concerns. But this needs much more creativity and ambition than has been offered so far, and a stronger focus on non-military tools – such as the [agreement](#) signed in Tallinn between Estonia and NATO on cyber-defence.

The case for territorial missile defence as a NATO mission is far from made, despite the plethora of industry-led lobbyists and other partisan interest groups claiming that the ballistic missile threat is growing and can only be countered by missile defences. However, much more does need to be done to beef up contingency planning for defence against 'new threats' especially within and between former Soviet states now in NATO. But such contingency planning, where possible, should also include former Soviet states that are not members of NATO, including Russia itself, as partners. Ultimately, a re-doubling of efforts to establish a common value base with Russia is the most sustainable, cost-effective and feasible deterrence policy in Europe.

Conclusions

The dinner discussions in Tallinn on nuclear policy were a disappointing beginning to a conversation that is due to climax in mid-November when President Obama and other NATO government leaders gather in Lisbon, Portugal, to endorse a new Alliance Strategic Concept. As NATO Spokesman James Appathurai [said](#), "no decisions were taken" and "no specifics or specific proposals were put on the table". Nor according to Appathurai did any of the nations ask for withdrawal of US TNWS from European soil.

It would seem therefore that even the 'nuclear reformers' within NATO preferred to paper over differences in order to maintain the fiction of Alliance solidarity rather than press their legitimate security concerns. It could be that the reformers took a tactical decision to keep their powder dry in order to build further support behind the scenes before making their move during the final discussions on the new Strategic Concept. But having raised their flags in advance of Tallinn

it does look like a retreat in the face of heavy gunfire from the pro-nuclear lobby.

However, NATO solidarity on this issue remains largely illusory and is likely to be short-lived (since the differences cannot be swept under a carpet). Moreover, the outcome is likely to be portrayed by many States Parties to the upcoming nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference as a continuation of nuclear dogma within the Alliance.

First, despite the efforts of the nuclear bureaucracy to close or narrow the discussion within NATO, it is set to continue and may become more intense and polarised as the Strategic Concept review process draws to a close. The nuclear reformers will now be aiming to keep all options on the table and will seek to ensure that the language in the concept allows room for TNW withdrawal. They may also press for NATO nuclear doctrine to align with the recently revised US nuclear doctrine, as has historically been the case.

And even if little progress is achieved this year the discussions are unlikely to end in Lisbon. Other factors may intervene further down the line, especially the [cost of upgrading the delivery aircraft](#). While the F-16 aircraft used by Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as the Tornado aircraft flown by Italy, are not due to be withdrawn until around 2020, the German Tornado strike aircraft are due to retire from service before 2015. The latter will be replaced by the Eurofighter and the anti-nuclear dominated Bundestag is unlikely to pay for a significant upgrade to those aircraft in order to enable a continuation of a nuclear strike mission. And their nuclear strike partners may also shrink from the budgetary realities, albeit more distant. Both Italy and the Netherlands, for example, plan to purchase a nuclear-capable version of the [US F-35 joint strike fighter](#), but development of the aircraft has been subject to lengthy delays and rising costs, with a price tag currently expected at around \$192 million per plane.



Eurofighter – photo credit: [....Tim/flickr](#)

Second, in resting on the status quo, the NATO Foreign Ministers also ease pressure on Moscow in relation to Russian disarmament commitments on TNWs. For example, the Russian government is refusing to acknowledge that it has any lasting obligations under the 1991-92 [Presidential Nuclear Initiatives](#). Under these unilateral, voluntary and parallel declarations by the US and Soviet Union in 1991, and reiterated by President Yeltsin in a slightly modified form in 1992, both sides agreed to greatly reduce the numbers of TNWs and to deploy the remaining stockpiles in central storage. However, the Russians deny that the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives remain in force.

Had the NATO Foreign Ministers sent a strong signal at Tallinn that it was their intention to return all TNWs to US territory at the earliest opportunity – the exact timing could have been left for future discussion and agreement – they could also have announced a number of parallel initiatives aimed at securing Russia cooperation, including assistance in helping Moscow account for and secure its TNWs, and perhaps implement additional reductions. Secretary Clinton, as part of her announced principles, might also have included a commitment to seek a joint statement with the Russians that reaffirmed their bilateral commitment to the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. And NATO could have announced that it would be making information on its TNWs available on a voluntary basis at the NPT review conference, thereby increasing pressure on the Russians to do likewise.

Unfortunately, however, the Alliance has missed a golden opportunity to build on President Obama's achievements and send a positive message to the NPT review conference. Barring a dramatic meltdown in relations with Russia, most rational observers agree that the days of TNWs in Europe are over. The US administration is ready to accept withdrawal and the Pentagon has contingency plans for that eventuality. It is simply a question of when and how. But instead of securing positive headlines from Tallinn, the ministers echoed the traditional rationale for keeping the weapons in Europe: the nuclear sharing responsibilities.

As former director general of the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA), Mohamed El-Baradei, reminded participants at the July 2009 seminar on the new NATO Strategic Concept, in developing its own policies NATO has a responsibility to think about the message it is sending on nuclear weapons. The Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) within NATO, like all other NNWS signatories to the NPT, pledged to eliminate nuclear weapons and also to eschew the acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Change Your Mindset



the military and wider society. As this article by David Isenberg shows individual service men and women within the US military are all too frequently denied quality health care and the psychological and physical damage to combat soldiers is particularly alarming.

Yet as members of the world's only nuclear weapons alliance, they also continue to rely indefinitely on nuclear weapons for their own security (and for those NATO NNWS with nuclear weapons on their territories the contradictions are even starker). These contradictions have been tolerated by most of the NPT community throughout the full life of the Treaty, but it does not follow that they will continue to be tolerated indefinitely. And while there are other serious and more immediate threats to the NPT, the continuing failure of the NNWS members of NATO to come into full compliance with the spirit and letter of the Treaty is likely to further exacerbate tensions between the nuclear 'haves' and 'have nots' at the May review conference.

In a wide-ranging [speech](#) on NATO transformation at the Belgian Royal High Institute for Defence on 26 April, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that the "biggest reform challenge is to change our mind-set". Nowhere is this truer than in relation to NATO nuclear policy. The nuclear status quo is not sustainable and those within the Alliance who fail to recognise this fundamentally fail to understand the changed world in which NATO operates. While the Alliance remains far from finding a consensual solution, it cannot postpone the day of reckoning indefinitely.

Acknowledgement:

This article draws on the insights and analysis of an informal group of transatlantic arms control specialists. However, the content is the sole responsibility of the author.

Nothing is Too Good for Our Boys, Redux

David Isenberg, independent analyst and NATO Watch Associate

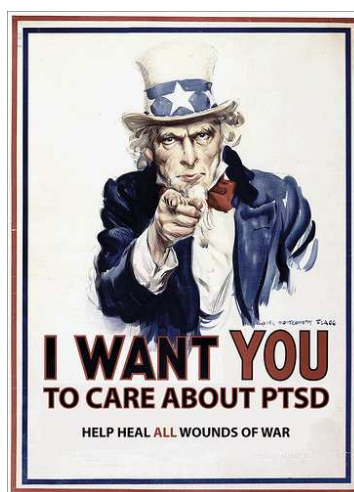
In the 2009 [Citizens Declaration of Alliance Security](#) it was argued that NATO has a 'Responsibility to Protect' its own service personnel. This means the Alliance prioritising better equipment, pay and conditions for service personnel as part of a renewed compact between

The article first appeared in 'Across the Aisle', the [Partnership for a Secure America's](#) Bipartisan Foreign Policy and National Security Blog on 27 April. Click [here](#) for original post.

Two years after my discharge from the Navy in 1977 I was doing undergraduate work at the University of Oregon. While there I was a member of a campus veterans group. We did a lot of advocacy on behalf of Vietnam and Vietnam era veterans, on issues that back then were still unknown, such as Agent Orange exposure and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

One thing I took away from that was that while most people were happy to talk about the sacrifices of veterans it was, in the end, mostly talk. When it came to actually doing something or putting their money where their mouth was, most people, rather like Dick Cheney's famous excuse for avoiding the draft, had better things to do. In short, as the classic mordant military humour puts it, nothing is too good for our boys in uniform so that's what we'll give them, nothing.

Still, I had some minor hope that in the future, if only because the VA would never again want to be perceived as incompetent and ineffectual as it was back then, that it and the regular military would do somewhat better in the future.



I Want YOU to Care About PTSD – photo credit: [Ilona Meagher](#)/ flickr

And, to be fair, some good things did happen in the intervening years. The VA set up its Vet Center program for Vietnam vets, slightly better educational benefits programs were instituted for

active duty forces, and PTSD was recognized as a legitimate medical illness to name a few improvements.

Then the Walter Reed Army Medical Center neglect scandal happened, resulting from a series of allegations of unsatisfactory conditions and management at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) in Washington, D.C. culminating in two articles published by the *Washington Post* in February 2007. Cases of outpatient neglect, were reported as early as 2004, but generated substantial public and media attention only with release of the Post exposé.

It all seemed dreadfully familiar. There was the usual outrage, both genuine and feigned, on the part of the public and Congress and pundits; calls for action, investigations, establishments of commissions to study the problems, recommendations for improvement, et cetera, ad nauseam.

Indeed, less than a week after the article, new Defense Secretary Robert Gates visited Walter Reed and said those responsible would be “held accountable”:

I endorse the decision by Secretary of the Army Fran Harvey to relieve the Commander, Major General George W. Weightman of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The care and welfare of our wounded men and women in uniform demand the highest standard of excellence and commitment that we can muster as a government. When this standard is not met, I will insist on swift and direct corrective action and, where appropriate, accountability up the chain of command.

So, let's fast forward to the present and see how we are doing three years later. Let's just look at a few articles from this month.



An injured soldier holds stands on the pedals of his bicycle prior to Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride, New York City, July 2009 – photo credit: [NYCMarines/ flickr](#)

USA Today [reported](#) April 1 that the Department of Veterans Affairs has no way of determining long-range health care costs for the veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a federal study on the wars' impact released a day earlier shows.

The next day *USA Today* [reported](#) that soldiers who say they killed enemy troops in combat are at greater risk of suffering combat stress and having emotional problems, according to a new study. Those soldiers often pay a profound psychological and emotional toll, according to Shira Maguen, a staff psychologist at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and lead author of the study on soldiers and post-traumatic stress disorder. Of nearly 2,800 soldiers surveyed, 40% reported killing or being responsible for somebody's death in Iraq.

Also that day the *San Antonio Express-News* [reported](#) that Fort Hood has had at least nine questionable deaths among young soldiers in the first three months of 2010, more than half of them confirmed suicides, despite Army efforts to reverse a trend linked to war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The deaths of five GIs assigned to the post this year have been confirmed as suicides, with another suspected of killing himself. That's about half the number for all of 2009, when 11 GIs committed suicide. Fort Hood, the biggest post in the Army as the year began with 46,500 troops, had a suicide rate of 26 per 100,000 people from 2006 to 2008, far above the civilian rate of 14.06 per 100,000.

The *New York Times* [reported](#) April 25 that Fort Carson's Warrior Transition Battalion, a special unit created to provide closely managed care for soldiers with physical wounds and severe psychological trauma, is far from being a restful sanctuary:

For many soldiers, they have become warehouses of despair, where damaged men and women are kept out of sight, fed a diet of powerful prescription pills and treated harshly by non-commissioned officers. Because of their wounds, soldiers in Warrior Transition Units are particularly vulnerable to depression and addiction, but many soldiers from Fort Carson's unit say their treatment there has made their suffering worse.

See the predictable Pentagon response taking exception to the *NYT* article [here](#). Yet bear in mind that the Pentagon official in charge of the wounded warrior program [said](#) that he has been forced to resign, as the military continues to struggle with how best to care for troops injured in combat. Noel Koch said in an e-mail that he was asked to step down by Clifford Stanley, the undersecretary of defense for personnel. Koch had been serving as the deputy undersecretary of defense for wounded warrior care and transition policy.

The same day the *Associated Press* [reported](#) that the authorities believe that 21 soldiers from Fort

Campbell, Kentucky killed themselves in 2009, the same year that the Army reported 160 potential suicides, the most since 1980, when it started recording those deaths. The number of patients being treated at the behavioural health clinic at the base hospital has increased by 60 percent, from 25,400 in 2008 to nearly 40,000 in 2009.

And finally, but surely not last, on April 27, *USA Today* [reported](#) that the Pentagon effort to consolidate two premier hospitals for treating wounded troops has more than doubled in price, and is so rudderless that an independent review and a bipartisan group of legislators say that "wounded warrior care will suffer".

News, Commentary and Reports:

Afghanistan (see also 'NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting' below):

(photo credit: [Stitch/flickr](#))



News

[Afghan feminists fighting from under the burqa](#) - Feminists in Afghanistan are forced to operate as underground movement, often using the burqa as a convenient disguise, Jon Boone, *The Guardian*, 30 April

[Afghan MP says U.S. troops raid home, kill relative](#), *Reuters*, 29 April

[U.S. seeks to prop up Kandahar governor, sideline troublesome power brokers](#), Joshua Partlow, *Washington Post*, 29 April

[Afghanistan forces face four more years of combat, warns Nato official](#) - Nato's top civilian official in Afghanistan warns of further deaths in 'very tough year' for British and other foreign troops, *The Guardian*, 29 April

[Afghanistan denies police role in killing of U.N. staffers](#), *Los Angeles Times*, 28 April

[Afghan elder who spoke out shot dead near Kandahar](#), *BBC News*, 28 April

♦♦ [Report: Afghans still skeptical of new government](#), *Associated Press*, 28 April. The Congressionally-mandated Pentagon review of progress in Afghanistan, released on 28 April (available [here](#)), found that only one in four Afghans in "key regions" of the country support or are sympathetic to the Afghan government. The report also states that more Afghans feel "secure" now than did six months ago, while support for insurgents is dropping. And while the report found that coalition offensives and arrests have sown confusion among the Taliban, the movement's reach and military capability is expanding.

[Pakistan Taliban chief Hakimullah Mehsud is alive, says spy agency](#). Setback for CIA after Pakistan intelligence official admits drone attack failed to kill the Pakistan Taliban commander, *The Guardian*, 28 April

[Afghanistan – the new skiing destination](#). Risky Afghanistan is not an obvious tourist draw. But it's hoped that a snowy valley may change that, *The Guardian*, 27 April

[U.S. Troops Fill NATO Training Gap In Afghanistan](#), Tom Bowman, *NPR*, 27 April

[Karzai's brother vows to back Nato](#), *Financial Times*, 26 April

[Secretary General calls for greater NATO-EU police training synergy](#), NATO News, 26 April

[Elite U.S. Units Step Up Effort in Afghan City Before Attack](#), *New York Times*, 25 April

[Taliban fighters lay down their guns to harvest opium poppies](#) - Senior soldier says number of attacks on British troops have fallen but he expects them to rise again in summer, *The Guardian*, 23 April

[Afghanistan surge planned as shift to Kandahar proposed for UK soldiers](#) - US commanders draw up strategic plans for what they hope will be a final and conclusive push against Taliban-led insurgents, *The Guardian*, 21 April

[Nato offensive aims to tackle bribery and corruption in Kandahar](#) - Afghanistan's biggest problem is lack of strong government, says Nato alliance spokesman, *The Guardian*, 18 April

[U.S. doubles anti-Taliban special forces](#) - Secretive buildup of elite teams reflects view that time is short to degrade Afghanistan opposition, *Los Angeles Times*, 15 April

[Kazakhstan to Permit Military Overflights to Afghanistan](#), *New York Times*, 12 April

[U.S. Admits Role in February Killing of Afghan Women](#), *New York Times*, 4 April

Commentary and Reports

[A Plan to Stabilize Afghanistan](#), Shahmahmood Miakhel, *Afghanistan Paper #4*, The Centre for International Governance Innovation, May 2010

[Progress in Part](#), Paul Rogers, *International Security Monthly Briefing*, Oxford Research Group, April 2010



Combined Afghan-NATO efforts in Afghanistan are at a critical juncture. A population-centric approach and renovated organisational structures are making significant progress possible. However, the challenges to the mission remain plentiful and complex. Commitment, resources, and strategic patience will be necessary if current efforts are to fully bear fruit. This is the principal conclusion brought back by a [delegation from the NATO Parliamentary Assembly](#) that visited Afghanistan April 23-28, 2010. A detailed visit report will be available shortly on the Assembly's website.

Composition of the delegation:

Frank Cook (UK), General Rapporteur, Defence and Security Committee; John Sewel (UK), Chairman, Subcommittee on Transatlantic Economic Relations; Wladyslaw Sidorowicz (Poland), Vice-Chairman, Political Committee; Mati Raidma (Estonia), Head of the Estonian delegation to the NATO PA; Kresimir Cosic (Croatia), Head of the Croatian delegation to the NATO PA; David Hobbs, Secretary General of the NATO PA. Accompanied by Jack Segal, the Chief Political Adviser to the Commander, Joint Force Command Brunssum, Alex Tiersky, Director of the Assembly's Defence and Security Committee, and Ruxandra Popa, Director of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security.

Sven Mikser (Estonia), Vice-President of the NATO PA;

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Young people express their hopes for a future without nuclear weapons and war. UK policy makers (including former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson) and prominent disarmament experts talk about what is being done internationally to deal with growing nuclear threats and the vast global stockpiles of nuclear weapons

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Upcoming Events:

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[The UK-US Alliance: Still Special or Just Another Partnership?](#) Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall, London, 18 May

[The Eleventh RUSI Ballistic Missile Defence Conference](#), Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall, London, 26-27 May

[NATO Parliamentary Assembly Spring Session](#), Riga, Latvia, 28 May- 1 June.

[UN Forum 2010](#), UNA-UK event, London, 12 June. UN Forum will be a large-scale civil society event with the theme 'An effective UN in a more secure and just world'. Featuring presentations, panel debates, films and workshops opportunities to act on peace, development & human rights.

7th Pan-European Conference, Standing Group on International Relations (SGIR), [European Foreign Policy in transition: New IR/EI approaches to EU foreign policy](#), Stockholm, Sweden, 9-11 September

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Droning – in the background you can just see a predator drone – photo credit [Todd Huffman](#) /flickr

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