

## Chicago Summit Sketch:

### Sec Rasmussen's Lonely Hearts Club Band

By Nowhere Man for NATO Watch

The Chicago Summit was a bit of a damp squib. [The protests took place largely without incident](#) as did the Summit itself. The deployment of tear gas and other crowd control weapons had been widely anticipated, but in the event did not become necessary since all the Heads of State and government representatives fell into line behind President Obama and Secretary General Rasmussen's pre-cooked agenda.

The Summit could have turned ugly over France's "not negotiable" plans to pull its combat troops out of Afghanistan by the end of 2012. The withdrawal of French fries from the working dinner menus had been threatened, but the 24th President of the *République française* and a Socialist to boot (but with a name designed to suggest to some Americans that he comes from a neighbouring European country) managed to win over his NATO counterparts. He did this partly by promising not to pull France out of the Afghanistan mission altogether and partly by agreeing to say nice things about the food in Chicago.

Hence, the only clanging sound was of multiple cans being kicked down the road. Afghanistan was the headline act, but failed to rouse much beyond a reassertion of existing financial and military commitments amongst the member nations, as well as solid assurances that the withdrawal process would begin soon. The Afghan cans will be recycled in Tokyo later this year as collecting tins for the as yet many undisclosed international pledges of financial support.

The cans containing tactical nuclear weapons, probably the noisiest and deadliest on the block, were punted into the long grass yet again. Despite being described by a plethora of ministers and experts as relics from the past, actually making

them disappear from Europe continues to be a transatlantic bridge too far. Disarmament it would seem is a [slow and difficult business](#) especially for an alliance that operates at the speed of a golf cart rather than a sports car.

Two former ambassadors to NATO writing in the [New York Times](#) on the eve of the Summit drew on the Beatles for inspiration. "Will you still need me when I'm sixty-four?" they asked, and answered their own rhetorical question with an unequivocal yes. (In case you hadn't realised, NATO is now in its 64th year). Perhaps it is a good thing that NATO now resembles a comforting Beatles song or a warm woolly jumper that your grandma has knitted and that its 25th summit (the first was held in Paris in 1957) passed off with a [few stifled yawns](#).



Of course, given the huge Beatles back catalogue, there are numerous other songs that could have applied to this Summit. "Across the Universe" for extended 'Out of Area' operations, "All Together Now" for the US can shaking exercise aka 'The Afghan Reset Levy', "Carry That Weight" for Smart Defence and burden sharing and "Do You Want to Know a Secret?" in response to what goes on at North Atlantic Council meetings.

It is also reassuring to know that should the Blue Meanies—last spotted in Tehran, Sanaa, Islamabad, Moscow or Paris, depending upon which of the 17 US intelligence agencies' reports you believe—ever seek to re-invade Pepperland, NATO is there to defend us. The 'interim ballistic missile defence capability' will be more than a match for the Meanies' guns that fire petrifying jagged arrows (but probably not ballistic missiles with decoys), while The Dreadful Flying Glove will continue to be deterred by US tactical nuclear weapons in Europe that are almost as old as Sir Paul McCartney, but nowhere near as endearing or useful

