

NATO's Military Committee

focused on operations,
capabilities, cooperation,
and transformation





The Military Committee (MC)

NATO's highest military authority is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of all 29 member countries. They meet at least three times a year as a group. On a day-to-day basis, their work is carried out by permanent Military Representatives at NATO HQ in Brussels. They meet one to four times a week in formal and informal sessions to discuss, deliberate and act on matters of military importance, working in the best interests of the Alliance, while at the same time representing national perspectives and positions.

The Military Committee provides the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO's highest political authority, with consensus-based military advice - that is, advice agreed by all Chiefs of Defence. It works closely with the two Strategic Commanders¹ to bring plans, issues and recommendations forward for political consideration. In turn, it gives clear military direction to the Strategic Commanders based on Military Committee and North Atlantic Council decisions.

The Military Committee represents a vast amount of specialized knowledge and experience that informs Alliance-wide military policies, strategies and plans, and is a key part of the NATO decision-making process.

¹ The overall planning and direction of all NATO operations rests with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), who works from Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Headquarters in Mons, Belgium. Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), working from Norfolk, U.S., is responsible for enhancing NATO military capabilities, developing concepts, policies, and joint NATO training.

The Role of the Chairman

The Chairman of the Military Committee is elected by the NATO Chiefs of Defence, normally for a three-year term. He represents their consensus-based views as the senior military adviser to the Secretary General, the North Atlantic Council and other NATO organizations. He guides the Military Committee's agenda and deliberations, listening to views and working to reconcile divergent national positions or policy differences to fashion advice that all can agree to. Each Nation has an equal voice in the discussion and decisions, as all Member Nations provide the personnel and the financial resources needed to conduct NATO operations and other activities.

As the Alliance's top officer and most senior military spokesperson, General Petr Pavel (Czech Army), the current Chairman, regularly visits operations and Allied and Partner countries to explain NATO's role and military work and to maximize NATO military capabilities and efficiencies. He is assisted by the Deputy Chairman, Lt Gen Steven M. Shepro (US Air Force).



General Petr Pavel, the current Chairman of the Military Committee, is the most senior military authority of the Alliance. Nominated by NATO's Chiefs of Defence, he chairs all the meetings of the Military Committee and acts in an international capacity. NATO's Chiefs of Defence meet at least three times a year, and on a day-to-day basis work through permanent Military Representatives in NATO HQ in Brussels.



The Military Committee's principal role is to provide direction and advice on military policy and strategy. It is responsible for recommending to NATO's political authorities those measures considered necessary for the common defence of the NATO area and for the implementation of decisions regarding NATO's operations and missions.



Lieutenant General Steven M. Shepro, Deputy Chairman of NATO's Military Committee (left) with Lieutenant General Jan Broeks, Director General of the International Military Staff (right).

Six Steps to Agreed Military Advice

When NATO political authorities are considering military action, a critical part of the information needed to reach informed decisions that all Nations can agree to comes from its military authorities. The North Atlantic Council receives regular briefings and reports, and at each key stage the Military Committee is called on to give advice and to provide direction to NATO Military Authorities (NMAs).

Step ①. The North Atlantic Council tasks the Military Committee to produce military advice that can be agreed by all 29 NATO Chiefs of Defence.

Step ②. The International Military Staff, in support of the Military Committee, translates the political guidance into military direction and tasks one or both Strategic Commands for their best military advice on how to organise and conduct what has been asked for, including an assessment of the personnel and financial resources required.

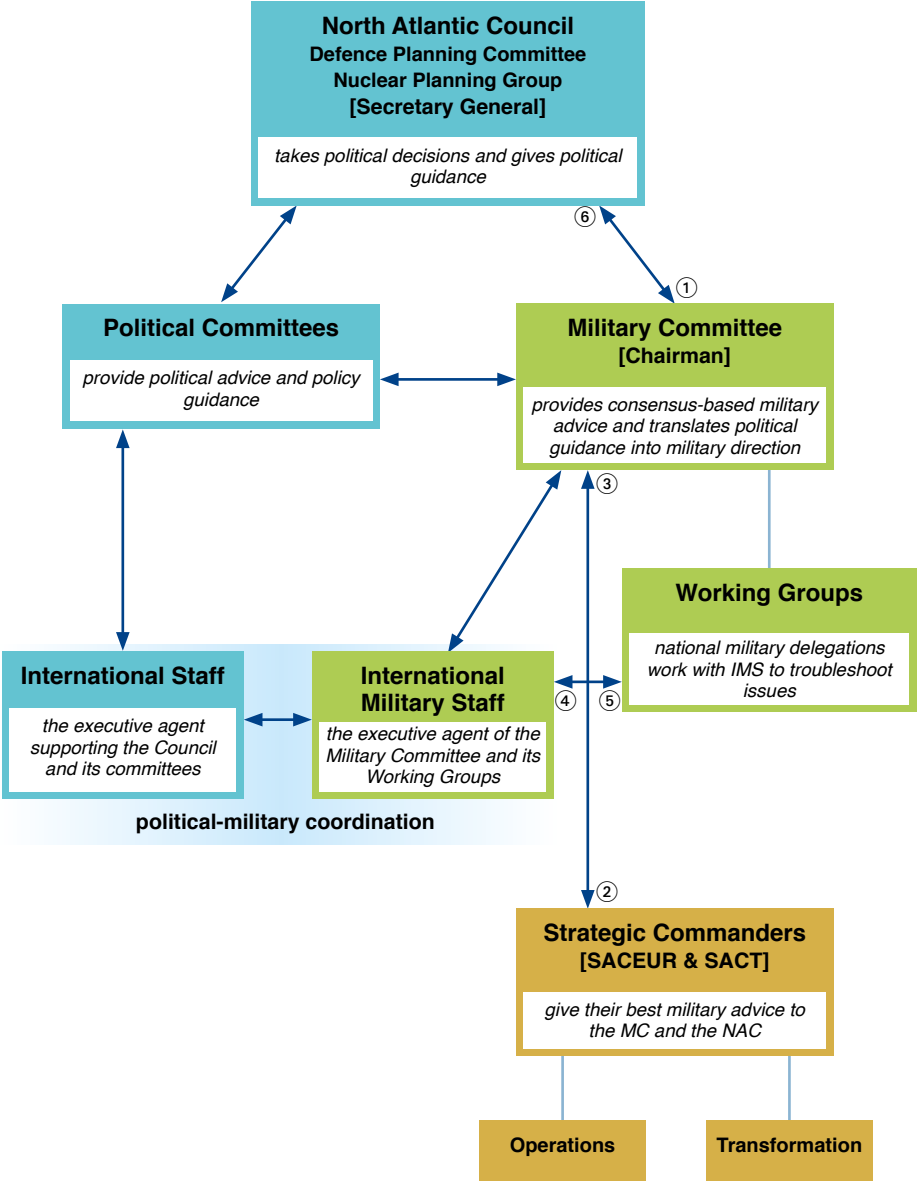
Step ③. The input from the Strategic Command(s) is provided to the Military Committee (i.e. to the Nations) for consideration, usually with an initial assessment by the International Military Staff.

Step ④. The Military Representatives provide their response and advice from a national standpoint. The 29 views need to converge into consensus advice that can be passed on to the North Atlantic Council.

Step ⑤. Military working groups meet regularly to troubleshoot and work through issues as consensus is not always achieved immediately on complex undertakings. Staff from national military delegations work with subject matter experts under an International Military Staff (IMS) Chairperson.

Step ⑥. The final agreed product, together with the initial advice from the Strategic Command(s), is then sent to the North Atlantic Council to inform their deliberations, consultations and decision-making. This is a continuous process for every activity, be it an operational plan, a conceptual paper or a policy proposal.

The NATO Military Decision-Making Process



Two-way arrows show continuous circle of consultation and guidance.

The International Military Staff (IMS)

The IMS supports the Military Committee, with about 500 dedicated military and civilian personnel working in an international capacity for the common interest of the Alliance, rather than on behalf of their country of origin. Under the direction of the Director General, Lieutenant General Jan Broeks (Royal Netherlands Army), the staff prepares assessments, evaluations and reports on all issues that form the basis of discussion and decisions in the Military Committee.

The IMS is also responsible for planning, assessing and recommending policy on military matters for consideration by the Military Committee, and for ensuring their policies and decisions are implemented as directed. This staff is the essential link between the decision-making bodies of the Alliance, the two Strategic Commanders, national military delegations from NATO and Partner countries working in Brussels, and the civilian International Staff that support the Secretary General and the North Atlantic Council.

Functional Areas of the International Military Staff (IMS)

The Joint Intelligence & Security (JIS) Division merges NATO's civilian and military intelligence strands. This new division provides intelligence support to all NATO HQ elements, NATO member states and NATO Commands. It also provides strategic warning and situation awareness to all NATO HQ elements. The Division's core activities are: developing a NATO Intelligence framework, architecture and intelligence capabilities; providing customer oriented policies and NATO Agreed Intelligence Assessments; advising on intelligence sharing matters and conducting intelligence liaison activities.

The Operations and Planning (O&P) Division closely monitors NATO operations, follows exercises and training and provides advice on all related ongoing and unfolding military operations. It also follows the implementation of decisions taken by the MC with regard to NATO operations. The Division's core activities are: NATO and NATO-led current and unfolding military operations; operation plans and crisis management procedures / arrangements; NATO education, training, exercises and evaluation events and/or systems; NATO military responsibilities in the fields of Air Defence (AD), Airspace Management, Air Traffic Management (ATM), Air Policing (AP), Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), NATO Airborne Early Warning (NAEW), Electronic Warfare (EW), Information Operations (InfoOps) and Meteorological and Oceanographic (METOC) operations.

The Policy and Capabilities (P&C) Division has the military lead within NATO HQ for all matters related to Alliance defence policy and strategic planning. This Division provides strategic military advice across three broad areas: Strategic Policy and Concepts; Nuclear Deterrence Policy and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence Policy; and Arms Control and non-Proliferation Policy, Defence Planning, Capability Development and Delivery including Armaments as well as Science and Technology aspects.

The Cooperative Security (CS) Division develops and implements military Cooperative Security policy and is responsible for the military contacts and aspects of NATO's Cooperation with NATO's current 41 Partner nations and all other non-Partner nations interested in performing military activities with NATO. In addition, the Division is responsible for NATO's coordination with International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations, such as the United Nations, European Union, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, African Union, Gulf Cooperation Council, International Committee of the Red Cross, and many more.

The Logistics and Resources (L&R) Division develops and defines policies and principles, plans and concepts on all matters concerning logistics, medical, civil emergency planning, military manpower and civilian personnel functions, NATO medals and NATO common-funded resources. In addition, the Division is the IMS' focal point for the three resource pillars: NATO infrastructure investment, military budget and manpower. The L&R Division acts as a facilitator with Nations in the Logistics, Medical and Resource Committees.

The NATO Headquarters C3 Staff (NHQC3S) supports the development of policy standards and provides analysis and advice to NATO in the Consultation Command and Control (C3) domain. This Division has an integrated staff (IS/IMS) and reports to both Director General International Military Staff and Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment (ASG/DI) while advising the NAC through the C3 Board and the MC on C3. The NHQC3S also works closely with the Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges (ASG/ESC) in support of the Alliance in all Cyber Defence matters and provides Military Committee (MC) advice on its military aspects. Additionally, the NHQC3S supports the C3 Capability Area Manager in the coordination of C3 Capabilities.

The NATO Situation Centre (SITCEN) is designed to provide situational awareness and alerting to the NAC and the MC in fulfilling their respective functions during peace, in periods of tension and crisis and for high level exercises. This is to be achieved through the receipt, exchange and dissemination of information from all available internal and external sources. SITCEN also acts as the link with similar facilities of member nations and the Strategic Commands (SCs), including the SHAPE Comprehensive Crisis and Operations Management Centre (CCOMC), as well as selected International Organizations, as appropriate.

The Military Committee oversees several operations and missions including:

- **RESOLUTE SUPPORT Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan.** On January 1st 2015, NATO opened a new chapter in its relationship with Afghanistan. The RESOLUTE SUPPORT Mission's main focus is to train, advise and assist the Afghan Security Forces and institutions. RESOLUTE SUPPORT focuses on eight key areas: civilian oversight of Afghan Security Institutions; strategy and policy planning, resourcing and execution; multi-year budgeting; force generation; force sustainment; intelligence; strategic communications; and transparency, accountability and oversight. In all those areas, the objectives are to help the Afghan security forces, security ministries and institutions as well as the necessary levels of the Afghan army and police develop the processes and mechanisms they need to become sustainable in the long term. RESOLUTE SUPPORT operates in Kabul and four other main locations: Mazar-i-Sharif (north), Herat (west), Kandahar (south) and Laghman (east).
- **Kosovo Force (KFOR).** Since June 1999, NATO has led a peacekeeping operation in Kosovo. Initially composed of 50,000 troops following the March 1999 air campaign, the force now numbers around 4,400 NATO member and Partner Nation personnel.
- **Operation SEA GUARDIAN (OSG).** In October 2016, NATO launched a flexible maritime operation called Sea Guardian that can perform the full range of maritime security tasks. OSG is capable of conducting any of the agreed seven maritime security operational tasks: maritime situational awareness, freedom of navigation, maritime interdiction, countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, protecting critical infrastructure, countering terrorism at sea and maritime security capacity-building. OSG is currently operating in the Mediterranean Sea.
- **NATO deployment of Patriot Missiles to Turkey.** Patriot missile batteries are currently operating under NATO command and control in Southern Turkey in order to augment Turkey's air defence capabilities to defend its population and territory.
- **NATO support to assist with the refugee and Migrant Crisis in the Aegean Sea.** Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) is conducting reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance in the territorial waters of Greece and Turkey as well as in international waters in order to contribute to international efforts to stem illegal trafficking and illegal migration.
- **NATO also provides assistance to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and capacity building support to its long-term peacekeeping capabilities, in particular the African Standby Force.**
- **Air Policing.** NATO Air Policing is a peacetime and purely defensive mission which aims to preserve the security of Alliance airspace. It is a collective task of continuous presence of surveillance and fighter interceptor aircrafts, ready for a quick reaction to airspace violations and infringements. Preservation of the integrity of NATO airspace is part of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System.
- **In addition, around 90 NATO military personnel in Sarajevo, Skopje and Belgrade assist with defence and security reform.** The International Military Staff is also represented in Moscow (Russia), Kiev (Ukraine) and the United Nations through its military liaison officers.



International Military Staff

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