

DEPARTAMENTO SEGURIDAD INTERNACIONAL Y
DEFENSA

NATO

NATO's policy guidelines on counter-terrorism

Aware, Capable and Engaged for a Safer Future

I. Introduction

Terrorism poses a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries, and to international stability and prosperity more broadly and will remain a threat for the foreseeable future. Terrorists have demonstrated their ability to cross international borders, establish cells, reconnoitre targets and execute attacks. The threat is exacerbated by terrorist groups and individuals that continue to spread to, and in, areas of strategic importance to the Alliance, including Allies' own territory. Modern technology increases the potential impact of terrorist attacks employing conventional and unconventional means, particularly as terrorists seek to acquire chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) capabilities and cyber abilities. Instability or conflict can create an environment conducive to the spread of terrorism, including by fostering extremist ideologies, intolerance and fundamentalism.

NATO's response to terrorism has been largely shaped by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which prompted Allies to launch Operation Active Endeavour, to adopt the Military Concept for Defence against Terrorism (MC472) and to initiate various capability and institutional changes. In the past decade, NATO has made considerable

progress in areas of importance to the Alliance such as operations, enhanced intelligence exchange and the development of technology solutions through the Defence against Terrorism Programme of Work and the Science for Peace and Security Programme.

Through the Alliance Strategic Concept, Allies reaffirmed that the Alliance must “deter and defend against emerging security challenges where they threaten the fundamental security of individual Allies or the Alliance as a whole”. Allies have, therefore, decided to review NATO’s approach to counter-terrorism and to enhance both the political and the military aspects of NATO’s contribution to national and international efforts.

Allies will do so by capitalising on NATO’s distinct cross-cutting strengths and by identifying the Alliance’s value-added contribution to the broad, UN-led international effort to combat terrorism. In defining NATO’s overarching approach to terrorism, Allies recognise that most counter terrorism tools remain primarily with national civilian and judicial authorities. Allies acknowledge that other International Organisations have mandates and capabilities that could enhance Allies’ efforts to counter terrorism. NATO will place particular emphasis on preventing terrorist attacks and enhancing resilience through contributing to national and international efforts while avoiding unnecessary duplication and respecting the principles of complementarity. Clear direction, enhanced coordination and greater consistency of efforts and activities will enable NATO to use its resources more effectively.

II. Aim

The aim of these policy guidelines is to:

Provide strategic and risk-informed direction to the counter-terrorism activities ongoing across the Alliance as part of NATO’s core tasks of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.

Identify the principles to which the Alliance adheres.

Identify key areas in which the Alliance will undertake initiatives to enhance the prevention of and resilience to acts of terrorism with a focus on improved awareness of the threat, adequate capabilities to address it and engagement with partner countries and other international actors¹.

Following the adoption of these Policy Guidelines, an Action Plan for Implementation will be developed.

III. Principles

Compliance with International Law: NATO will continue to act in accordance with international law, the principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, International Conventions and Protocols against terrorism and relevant UN Resolutions provide the framework for all national and multilateral efforts to combat terrorism, including those conducted by the Alliance.

NATO's Support to Allies: Individual NATO members have primary responsibility for the protection of their populations and territories against terrorism. Cooperation through NATO can enhance Allies' efforts to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. NATO, upon request, may support these efforts.

Non-Duplication and Complementarity: NATO will promote complementarity with and avoid unnecessary duplication of existing efforts by individual nations or other International Organisations. NATO will seek to coordinate and leverage its expertise and resources and will focus on targeted programmes where it can contribute to and/or reinforce the actions of Allied nations and other international actors, as appropriate.

IV. Key Areas

NATO, as an international organisation, has unique assets and capabilities that can support Allied efforts in the fight against terrorism. As set out in the aim of these Policy Guidelines, NATO will contribute more effectively to the prevention of terrorism and

increase resilience to acts of terrorism. To this end, the Alliance will coordinate and consolidate its counter-terrorism efforts and focus on three main areas, awareness, capabilities and engagement.

Awareness: NATO will ensure shared awareness of the terrorist threat and vulnerabilities among Allies through consultations, enhanced sharing of intelligence, continuous strategic analysis and assessments in support of national authorities. This will enable Allies and the Alliance to prepare effectively and to take possible mitigating action in the prevention of and response to terrorist attacks. NATO will also promote common understanding of its counter-terrorism role as part of a broader international effort through engagement and strategic communications.

Capabilities: NATO has acquired much valuable expertise in countering asymmetric threats and in responding to terrorism. NATO's work on airspace security, air defence, maritime security, response to CBRN, non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and protection of critical infrastructure is well established. The Alliance will strive to ensure that it has adequate capabilities to prevent, protect against and respond to terrorist threats, based on the level of ambition as defined in the Political Guidance². It will do so by considering capability developments, innovative technologies and methods that address asymmetric threats in a more comprehensive and informed way, including through the Defence Against Terrorism Programme of Work. NATO will also strive to maintain its operational capacity and capitalise on the lessons learned in operations, including experience gained through Special Operations Forces. Training, education and exercises based on different threat scenarios will continue to improve interoperability by assimilating lessons learned and best practices. These capabilities may also be offered to Allies in support of civil emergency planning and the protection of critical infrastructure, particularly as it may relate to counter-terrorism, as requested.

Engagement: The challenge of terrorism requires a holistic approach by the international community, involving a wide range of instruments. To enhance Allies' security, NATO will continue to engage with partner countries and other international actors in countering terrorism. The Alliance will strengthen its outreach to and cooperation with partner countries as well as international and regional organisations, in particular the UN, EU and OSCE, in accordance with the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan, to promote common understanding of the terrorist threat and to leverage the full potential of each stake-holder engaged in the global counter terrorism effort. NATO will enhance consultations and ensure a more systematic approach to practical cooperation with partner countries³ using existing mechanisms, including scientific cooperation on technological innovation for improved security⁴. Particular emphasis will be placed on raising awareness, capacity building, civil-emergency planning and crisis management in order to respond to specific needs of partner countries and Allied interests. This will advance partners' preparedness and protection as well as their identification of vulnerabilities and gaps and help partner countries to fight terrorism more effectively themselves. Counter-terrorism training, education and support for capacity-building will be consistent with the objectives and priorities of NATO's policy on partnerships.

V. NATO's Response

The North Atlantic Council will guide NATO's counter-terrorism efforts and implementation of these Policy Guidelines. The Terrorism Task Force will report on an annual basis on the implementation of these Policy Guidelines.

NATO will maintain flexibility as to how to counter terrorism, playing a leading or supporting role as required. Allies' capabilities represent an essential component of a potential response to terrorism. Collective defence remains subject to decision by the North Atlantic Council (NAC).