

"NATO: Preserving Unity Through Solidarity"

Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the World Affairs Council of Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia. May 9, 2011



Mr. Hall,
Mr. Lockhart,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for that welcome and kind introduction. Thank you to the World Affairs Council for organizing this event. It is great to be here - in Atlanta - today.

A week ago today, President Obama informed the American people about the successful operation against Osama bin Laden. That operation marked a significant success for the security of all 28 NATO Allies and the many nations which have joined us in our efforts to combat the scourge of global terrorism. I congratulated President Obama and all those involved.

Osama bin Laden stood against all the values that America and Europe have shared and upheld for many decades – freedom, tolerance and humanity. The bond of solidarity, that connects us, helps to preserve what George Washington once called ‘the sacred fire of liberty’.

That fire burns brightly not just for our benefit, but for the inspiration of others across the world. Over the past few months, brave people throughout the Arab world have cried out for freedom - freedom that we have enjoyed for many decades – not least thanks to NATO.

Change is taking hold in The Middle East and North Africa. But Libya is an exception. Colonel Qadhafi and his regime are brutally repressing their people who have expressed the desire for freedom.

In March, NATO Allies took command of all military operations in Libya to protect civilians against Colonel Qadhafi’s relentless attacks, acting with the authority of an historic UN Security

Council Resolution. We acted in response to a clear need, on a strong legal basis, and with solid regional support.

It was not an easy decision. But consider this: What if we had stood by and watched as Qaddafi's regime killed innocent civilians in Benghazi and beyond? What would that have said about our values? NATO is an Alliance of democracies, and we are acting as one.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Right after I arrived here in the United States on Saturday, I paid a visit to wounded US service personnel at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. It was a very humbling experience to be reminded of the sacrifice of these men and women who serve their country in a NATO operation.

Yesterday I had the honour to take part in a ceremony to commemorate Victory in Europe Day at the National World War Two Memorial in Washington. And that, as well, was a very moving occasion.

This afternoon I will go to Dobbins Air Base to meet with members of the Georgia National Guard. And when I am in Austin tomorrow, I will meet with Members of the Texas National Guard at Camp Mabry.

Over the years, your country's military forces have done an exceptional service for freedom, peace and democracy. That commitment continues today. And I have come to the United States to express my own sincere appreciation, and that of all the NATO Allies.

There may be misperceptions about NATO, and let me deal with them up front. Some believe that NATO is an unequal partnership, where the United States does all the heavy lifting and Europeans get the benefit. But NATO's security guarantee applies to all the Allies.

Europe came to America's aid within hours of the 9/11 attacks. We invoked the collective defence clause in our founding treaty for the first time in NATO's history. We made clear that an attack on the United States was an attack on all Allies.

That commitment is not just words. It is a reality every day. In Afghanistan, for example, over 40,000 Allied and partner troops are fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with American forces. Georgians from the U.S. state of Georgia and Georgians from the Republic of Georgia patrol Afghan villages with French and Polish troops.

NATO is a true Alliance. We are all in it together. All 28 Allies make shared sacrifices for our shared values and our shared security. When I was growing up in Denmark, we feared nuclear attack. United in NATO, we faced down that threat, and we overcame it. Today, many

different challenges lie before us. They are less predictable, but no less dangerous. And we can only address them together.

The successful operation against Osama bin Laden has dealt a serious blow to violent extremism. But international terrorism still poses a direct threat to our security and to stability across the world. Other threats we face include missile attack, piracy and cyber attacks. Over thirty countries now have or are developing ballistic missile capabilities. Nuclear proliferation threatens to destabilise some of the world's most volatile regions.

Pirates equipped with not much more than AK-47s and a fast speedboat are able to capture super tankers. And the Pentagon alone experiences a quarter-million cyber-attacks every single hour. Larger challenges include the security implications of climate change, water scarcity, and energy needs that increase as environmental resources decrease.

No one country can confront these threats alone. Not even a superpower like the United States can – and we certainly can't without the United States. Through the strength of our transatlantic bond in NATO, we can confront these problems together. And together we can serve as an example of freedom for others around the globe.

NATO's primary responsibility is defending Allies against attack. But one of our core tasks also is to promote international security and to deal with crises that affect Alliance security. Our operation in Libya is the sort of mission that NATO could be called upon to undertake more often in the future. Such missions can be challenging. But there are times when doing nothing is not an option.

Success will depend on the broadest possible coalition of nations and organizations working together, to achieve not only military security but also long-term political and economic stability. We are already seeing the benefits of such a broad international approach in Afghanistan today. Under a clear United Nations mandate, and working together with 20 partner countries, the United States and all its NATO Allies are bringing security and stability to a country that has been ravaged by over 30 years of conflict.

A secure and stable Afghanistan means a safer world for all of us. We have the right strategy, the right resources, and the resolve to see this through. And we will continue our missions to ensure that Afghanistan does not return to being a sanctuary for terrorists and extremists.

Over the course of the past year, we have taken the fight to the Taliban. We are training and educating ever more Afghan soldiers and policemen. And the Afghan Security Forces are playing an increasingly important role in combat operations and in solidifying the security gains. The Taliban attack in Kandahar a few days ago was spectacular, but it failed. Today all the insurgents are either captured or killed. This is yet another example of the increasing ability of Afghan forces to provide security for their own country.

We have now entered a new and significant phase in our Afghanistan mission, as we gradually transition lead security responsibility to the Afghans themselves. The transition process is on track. Together with our Afghan partners, we aim to complete it by 2014. But we remain committed to supporting Afghanistan well beyond, through an enduring partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have come to America, and to Atlanta, to say that NATO remains a vital Alliance. Because defending the values of freedom, democracy and humanity is vital to all of us. These values form a bond between Europe and North America that has been the bedrock of stability in all our nations.

The challenges before our nations today are numerous and complex. But I am convinced that, if the bond between us remains strong, we can face them together, and we can face them successfully.

As George Washington once wrote, *“every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.”* What George Washington described was the perfect combination of freedom and security. It is a noble vision. We share it. It is and will always be the vision of NATO.

Thank you.

Q&A

Q: NATO has already moved outside the western world to Afghanistan. What is your thought of the further growth of an alliance of democracies that is truly global? The problem is that we want to do this without alienating China. Can we develop a global alliance of democracies without forcing China into a corner?

Thank you very much indeed. It's a very, very interesting question. First of all, let me say that I do believe that the world's democracies should do more to consult with each other and to maybe also create a forum for cooperation and exchange of views on issues of common interest. It is my firm belief that the world's democracies should stand united in the defense of our common values: freedom, individual liberty, respect for human life and human rights. Having said that, I think we should be a bit cautious as regards NATO.

First of all, from a very formalistic point of view, if you study the North Atlantic treaty on which NATO is founded, it is clear from a geographic point of view the limitations of NATO. NATO is limited to comprise countries from Europe and North America. If we were to go beyond that geographical area then we would have to change the treaty on which NATO is founded. But within that geographical limitation, we should do our utmost to ensure that democracies that fulfill the necessary criteria can also join NATO. That's our Open Door policy: our door

remains open to all European democracies that fulfill the necessary criteria. In relation to your question, I think the right approach globally would be to further develop our partnerships across the globe and that's exactly what we decided to do at the NATO summit in Lisbon in November. We adopted a new strategic concept and a very important part of that concept is to further develop our partnerships with countries across the globe that can play an important role in the accomplishment of our security mission. And of course these partners include democracies across the globe. We have already a strong partnership with countries like Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea and they all fulfill the criteria.

Q: My question relates to the incredibly complex and intricate relationship between the United States and Pakistan. Can you share with us any thoughts on NATO's observations about the growing tensions between the two countries?

Q: On behalf of the Libyan people, and as a Libyan American, we thank you and the NATO forces for taking the courage and the position to save the Libyan people. I get phone calls from my folks in Mizracha. They are trying to find out—if you could shed light—on why Qadhafi's forces, given their resources, are still shelling and killing innocent people in Mizracha. I know the whole resolution of 1973 is to protect the innocent civilians and Mizracha is filled with innocent civilians.

First, on Pakistan. It goes without saying that the fact that Osama bin Laden apparently has been hiding in Afghanistan for quite some years, raises a lot of questions. A lot of questions have to be answered. I feel confident that the Pakistani government is also interested in finding convincing answers to these questions. We need strong cooperation with Pakistan if we are to ensure long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan and beyond, then we need a positive engagement of Pakistan and we need a strong Pakistani commitment to the fight against terrorists in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. We appreciate that the Pakistani military supported by the Pakistani government have stepped up their endeavors to fight against extremists and terrorists in the border regions, but I think more could be done, despite all the problems and tensions. My bottom line is that there is no alternative to a positive engagement with Pakistan and we should support those forces in Pakistan that realize that the real threat against the Pakistani society comes from terrorism and extremism and we have shared interest in combating that threat.

As far as Libya is concerned, thank you for your kind words. I understand very well your question because people ask why is Qadhafi still able to attack his own people. First of all, I have to say, we can do a lot through air campaigns but we cannot 100% guarantee that a brutal regime like the Qadhafi regime cannot attack his own people. Just one example, he uses snipers. How can we prevent snipers from killing innocent people through an air campaign? It's simply not possible. We can do a lot, but we cannot 100% prevent such outrageous attacks from the Qadhafi regime. I can assure you that we will continue at the very highest level of operation and I will remind you that it's only five weeks ago that NATO took control of the operation in Libya. During that period of time we have carried out more than 5500 sorties, out of which almost half have been air strikes and we have hit a lot of critical targets and taken out a significant part of Qadhafi's military capacity—tanks, armored vehicles, rocket launchers, ammunition depots, command and control centers— and by that we have significantly degraded

Qadhafi's war machine, and we will continue as long as there are attacks against the civilian population.

You may ask, for how long will this operation continue, and I'm not going to guess about time tables. We have defined three very clear military objectives. First, a complete end to all attacks against civilians; secondly, withdrawal of regime military and paramilitary forces to their bases and barracks; and thirdly, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need in Libya. We will continue with the aim to fulfill these three objectives. These are the military objectives. Having said that, I will also stress that there is no military solution solely, to the problems in Libya. And it is hard to imagine that the attacks against the civilian population would stop so long as Qadhafi remains in power. So the clear message is: Qadhafi, it's time to leave. Your time has run out. There's no future for you and your regime. The future belongs to the Libyan people, and it's for the Libyan people to shape the future of Libya. To that end we need a political process. So we will keep up the military pressure and it's imperative I think we should step up the political pressure to further isolate the Qadhafi regime and support the Libyan opposition. And with that combination of strong military pressure and increased political pressure, I'm confident that will lead to the break-down of the Libyan regime.

Q: This is a little bit of a follow-on to what you have just said, in the nature of a two-part question. On Libya, you've well defined the military benchmarks. After the first Persian Gulf War, Colin Powell said, "If you break it, you own it." We're seeing a series of interventions in the world—Afghanistan, Iraq, now Libya—where we tend as democracies to consider if we break it, then we feel like we own it. Has NATO considered what happens after the military benchmarks have been met? That's number one. Number two is, has NATO considered at what point as a NATO alliance can we consider *not* intervening in trouble spots in the world, because there are plenty of other spots where "innocent civilians" are being attacked by their own governments?

Q. The U.S. is in all likelihood about to enter a period of fiscal austerity and there's been discussion of reducing the United States presence in Europe, of reducing the number of bases and bringing home some of the troops. How would the NATO allies of the United States look on a reduction of our physical presence in continental Europe?

First, on the long term perspectives, you raised the question, have we considered what to do when the military campaign has been completed. Once again, let me stress that NATO has taken responsibility for the military operation with the aim to fully implement the UN Security Council resolution. So NATO, as such, is not engaged in the broader political solution that might follow a successful military campaign. To that end, we have established a broader international contact group which serves as the forum for international political consultations on the political track. We had a meeting, NATO participates, of course, and the main theme was how to further isolate the Libyan regime—Qadhafi and his regime—and how could we possibly strengthen support for the opposition, also financial. So I think the right answer to your question is that it's relatively easy to describe the end game: Qadhafi must leave power and open the way for a peaceful transition to democracy. At that meeting last week, the opposition, represented by the Interim National Council, presented a road map for how to develop a sustainable democracy in Libya. I was very encouraged by studying that road map

because I think that road map right now represents the best possible answer to your question—how can we move forward from a successful military campaign to a successful political solution. So the aim of the opposition represented by this National Council is to develop a well-functioning democracy in Libya.

Of course, it's legitimate to ask, why Libya? Why not other trouble spots in the world? And I think we have only a pragmatic answer to that question. The answer is, in the case of Libya, we had a UN Security Council resolution that formed the legal basis, we have strong support from that region—a number of countries from the region participate in the NATO-led operation. These conditions are fulfilled and this is the reason why we have taken action in Libya. I think the right answer is that we have to study each case and make a decision case by case.

The U.S. presence in Europe: First of all, let me stress, how important it is that the United States continue to be present, also militarily, in Europe. That's also the embodiment of our transatlantic bond and transatlantic alliance. The United States have announced certain adjustments I would call it, of the U.S. presence in Europe. They might be scaled down in certain areas but I think it is outweighed in a positive way by a further investment in other areas. And first and foremost I would point to the development of a NATO-based missile defense system which will also include input of U.S. assets. So I would say the U.S. adapts its presence in Europe to address the security challenges of the future. You may see a draw-down on more traditional military capabilities, but in exchange you will see increased efforts in new areas directed towards new security challenges. And I think that's appreciated broadly in Europe.

Q: I have a question about the long-term future of NATO that's necessarily speculative and maybe a little provocative. NATO has been fortunate to have a number of very talented secretaries general from different European countries over the years, including yourself, and it's also been fortunate to have a number of very talented American officers who have headed the military command in Europe. Can you imagine a day when those roles might be reversed and NATO might appoint its first American Secretary General and its first European commander in Europe?

Q: With the recent events in the Middle East, the recent events of the so-called Arab spring, do you anticipate future interest from these countries in cooperating with NATO once they stabilize their governmental situation?

Q: I am from Kent State University. As you can see, I'm Egyptian. I have two small, quick questions. The first one, how do you think the death of Osama bin Laden will affect the structure of NATO for the future? Osama bin Laden used to think the United States was the source of evil, but now the second person in charge is believing that the U.S. and its allies are the source of evil. Can expect more tourist attacks? We see how Qadhafi is acting now. Do you think Qadhafi is another Mullah Omar and how can we prevent that from happening?

Let me start with answering the last questions. Obviously, a successful operation against Osama bin Laden is a major blow to international terrorism and no doubt will significantly weaken the al Qaeda terror network. However, we should realize that terrorist networks still

exist and they still pose a threat to our nations. So my conclusion is that the operation against Osama bin Laden will not have an impact, at least not a direct impact, on our operations, even our operation in Afghanistan. We will stay the course; we will stick with the road map we decided in November last year and gradually hand over lead responsibility to the Afghans themselves, starting this year and hopefully completed by the end of 2014. However, I think the time has also come to send a very clear message to the Taliban. The Taliban is at a crossroads. Continued fighting will lead to Taliban defeat. So the time has come for the Taliban to cut links with al Qaeda, renounce violence, engage in the political process, and help rebuilding the Afghan society. I don't see Qadhafi as a new Omar. I see Qadhafi leaving office sooner rather than later. The Qadhafi regime's time is up. He and his regime have no future. And that's how I look upon that. I don't see a political solution in Libya with Qadhafi still in power.

Next question: cooperation with countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Yes, I see a strong potential. Actually, we do have partnerships with countries in that region already. NATO has two partnerships with countries in North Africa and the Middle East: we have a partnership called the Mediterranean Dialog, that counts seven countries, Israel plus six other countries from North Africa and the Middle East; and we have another partnership that counts four Gulf States. I think recent events have just demonstrated how important these partnerships are. Within these partnerships we can cooperate on military to military activities, we can conduct political consultations as these countries are in transition to democracy, and we also assist them in reforms of their military and their security sector. It goes without saying that we need comprehensive reforms of the military and the security sectors if we are to develop strong and sustainable democracies. We have expertise in that field and the partnerships will be used for that purpose.

And finally, could we reverse the roles within NATO in a longer term perspective. Actually I think the wise founders of NATO struck the right balance when they decided to let the Americans be in the lead of the military side, taking into account the military and economic strength of the United States, and to balance it on the lines of solidarity by having a civilian leader from the other side of the alliance. So I would say, in the foreseeable future we will and also should stick with the current arrangement. And I'm very satisfied being Secretary General.

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