

European Leaders Endorse Plan to Mitigate Risks to Civilian and Military Air Traffic in Europe

4 July 2016

NATO is beset by challenges. The south of the alliance faces state collapse and civil war in the Middle East and North Africa as well as a widespread terrorist threat, whilst the east faces a militarily abrasive Russia and a simmering conflict in Ukraine. Against such a backdrop decisions made at the upcoming Warsaw Summit are of vital importance, with a refocusing on effective deterrence, territorial defence, and reassurance measures taking precedence.

These measures may be necessary but they must be twinned with a parallel dialogue track, particularly as concerns Russia. The current confrontation has been characterised by a significant increase in military activity by both sides, resulting in a large number of aerial and naval encounters between their respective armed forces. Just as concerning is the ongoing action-reaction cycle of military exercises. Whilst this was and continues to be asymmetric, with Russian exercises of a much larger scale, this is a dangerous dynamic that carries a serious risk of misinterpretation. Recently [declassified materials](#) on the Soviet misinterpretation of NATO's Able Archer exercise in 1983, during which the Soviet Union began to implement procedures to repel an imminent NATO attack, stand as a stark warning of the dangers of opacity.

The European Leadership Network (ELN) has been consistent in its argument that this confrontation must be better managed, both through a reassessment of those Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) currently in place and through the development of new mechanisms.

The ELN has [called](#) for the resumption of dialogue through the NATO-Russia Council and welcomes the April 2016 Ambassadorial meeting. Further to this the ELN-sponsored Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe proposed a [NATO-Russia Memorandum of Understanding](#) in an effort to institute a multilateral framework within which to manage encounters between the two sides. This would institute uniform communication channels that would allow NATO and Russian military aircraft and naval vessels to operate in a better regulated and thus safer environment, diluting the risk of misinterpretation and escalation.

The ELN has also [called for a reassessment of the CSBMs](#) contained in the OSCE's Vienna Document, in particular the need to better enforce the provisions on the pre-notification and observation of large-scale military exercises. Disregard of these provisions is a particularly destabilising factor of the current confrontation.

The ELN has argued that this should be accompanied by restraint in the forward deployments by both sides and in the nuclear sphere. These measures, combined with better dialogue on military doctrines, could form the foundation of a more stable military equilibrium in Europe.

It is in this spirit that we are acting to endorse the proposal of another NATO-Russia CSBM, namely the need for reconstitution of the Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI).

We agree with the June 2016 [ELN policy brief](#) that the suspension of the NATO-Russia Cooperative Airspace Initiative (CAI) alongside other cooperative functions of the NATO-Russia Council in April 2014 has had a decidedly negative impact on air safety.

Instituted in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, the CAI was intended to provide increased transparency, early notification of suspicious air activities (including loss of communications with civilian aircraft), and rapid coordination and joint responses to security incidents in European airspace. This was to be achieved through real-time exchange of radar tracks and a shared picture of air traffic, dedicated lines of communication, and commonly agreed procedures for notification and coordination of suspicious air activities. Crucially these exchanges were not only between NATO and Russia but also between military and civilian air traffic controllers.

Such a mechanism is sorely needed in a period where on two occasions Russian aircraft have forced evasive manoeuvres from civilian airliners, with many more similar incidents exhibiting dangerous characteristics.

The ELN policy brief argues it is a simple measure to reactivate the software and hardware through which the CAI operates, what is required is a political commitment to make it work. We agree.

Whilst this may not be possible while the CAI remains under the remit of the NRC, it may be possible to remove the CAI from the auspices of the Council and institute it as a stand-alone measure. This will not be an easy political process and many legitimate security concerns will need to be addressed, however it is imperative to begin a reassessment of the CAI in order to protect civilian life.

The NATO-Russia confrontation dynamic remains volatile. In the current climate it is not difficult to envisage a fatal incident being interpreted as a deliberate, hostile action undertaken by 'the other', thus requiring an appropriate response. Once this dynamic is in place it is very difficult to defuse the situation, with political leaders drawn into rounds of successive and self-perpetuating escalation. It is thus crucial that political leaders take all possible precautions to minimise risk and the scope for misunderstanding.

It is for this reason that we endorse the ELN's proposal to reappraise and relaunch the Cooperative Airspace Initiative.

The signatories of this statement are as follows:¹

United Kingdom

- 1. Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom (James Arbuthnot)**, former Chairman of the House of Commons Defence Select committee
- 2. Admiral the Lord Boyce (Michael Boyce)**, former First Sea Lord and Chief of the Defence Staff
- 3. Lord Browne (Des Browne)**, former Defence Secretary
- 4. Lord Campbell of Pittenweem CH CBE QC (Menzies Campbell)**, former Liberal Democrat MP in the UK Parliament, former member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and member of the UK Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
- 5. Lord Hannay of Chiswick (David Hannay)**, Former Ambassador to the EU and to the UN; current Chair of UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Security and Non-Proliferation in the UK Parliament
- 6. Sir Nick Harvey**, former Member of Parliament and former Minister of State for the Armed Forces
- 7. Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (John Kerr)**, former UK Ambassador to the US and the EU
- 8. Tom McKane**, former Director General for Strategy and Security Policy, Ministry of Defence
- 9. Lord Ramsbotham (David Ramsbotham)**, ADC General (Ret.) in the British Army
- 10. Sir Malcolm Rifkind**, former Foreign and Defence Secretary
- 11. Lord Triesman (David Triesman)**, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), former Chairman of the Football Association and former General Secretary of the Labour Party
- 12. Lord Wallace of Saltaire PC (William Wallace)**, former Spokesperson for the Cabinet Office in the House of Lords and former Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
- 13. Admiral the Lord West of Spithead (Alan West)**, former First Sea Lord of the British Navy and current member of the House of Lords
- 14. Margaret Beckett**, former Foreign Secretary
- 15. Charles Guthrie**, former Chief of the Defence Staff

¹ This statement is issued in the names of the signatories only, not the membership of the European Leadership Network as a whole.

16. John McColl, Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey, Former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (Deputy SACEUR)

17. David Richards, former Chief of the Defence Staff

18. John Stanley, Chairman of the Committee on Arms Export Controls

Germany

19. Katja Keul, member of the Bundestag and Current Member of the Defence Committee

20. Klaus Naumann, former Chief of Staff, Former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee

21. Volker Rühle, former Defence Minister

22. Karsten D. Voigt, former Chairman of the German-Russian parliamentary group in the Bundestag; Former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO

23. Dr. Klaus Wittmann, former Bundeswehr general, Senior Fellow Aspen Institute Germany

24. Walter Kolbow, former Deputy Minister of Defence

25. Angela Kane, Outgoing UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs & Under-Secretary-General

France

26. General (Ret.) Bernard Norlain, former Air Defence Commander and Air Combat Commander in the French Air Force and Military Advisor to Prime Minister Michel Rocard

27. Paul Quilès, former Defence Minister

28. Alain Coldefy, former General Inspector of the French Armed Forces

Russia

29. Igor Yurgens, Chairman of the Board of the Institute of Contemporary Development

30. Anatoli Diakov, Director, Center for Arms Control, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology

31. Alexander Bessmertnykh, Former Foreign Minister

Turkey

32. Hikmet Cetin, former Foreign Minister

33. Ambassador Özdem Sanberk, former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

34. Osman Faruk Loğoğlu, former Turkish Ambassador the United States and former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Italy

35. Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, former Secretary General of OSCE, Ambassador to London and Moscow and Italian representative to the Albright Group for the drafting of NATO's "New Strategic Concept"

36. Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola, former Minister of Defence

37. Stefano Silvestri, President of the International Affairs Institute of Italy, consultant for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Defence and Industry

38. Ambassador Carlo Trezza, former Member of the Advisory Board of the UN Secretary General for Disarmament Matters and Chairman of the Missile Technology Control Regime

39. Carlo Schaerf, former Professor of Physics at the University of Rome "Tor Vergata"

40. Margherita Boniver, current member of Parliament and former Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

41. Gen. (R) Vincenzo Camporini, former Chief of Staff of the Italian Air Force and former Chief of the Defence General Staff

42. Paolo Cotta-Ramusino, Secretary General of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

Finland

43. Juhani Kaskeala, former Chief of Defence

44. Ambassador Jaakko Blomberg, former Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

45. Tarja Cronberg, former Member of the European Parliament

46. Jaakko Laajava, Former Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Security Policy and Facilitator of the WMDfZ in the Middle East

Ukraine

47. Oleksandr Chalyi, former First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

Poland

48. Adam Daniel Rotfeld, former Foreign Minister

Sweden

49. Ambassador Rolf Ekéus, former Swedish Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament

50. Henrik Salander, Former Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, Secretary-General of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission

51. Hans Blix, Former Foreign Minister and former IAEA Director General

Netherlands

52. Laurens Jan Brinkhorst, Former Minister of Economic Affairs

Norway

53. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO)

Serbia

54. Goran Svilanovic, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, former Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities

Denmark

55. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, former Foreign Minister

Portugal

56. Ricardo Baptista Leite, Member of Parliament

Bulgaria

57. Soloman Passy, former Foreign Minister, former Chairman of the United Nations Security Council,

58. Professor Todor Tagarev, former Defence Minister, Head of "IT for Security" Department & the Centre for Security and Defence Management IICT at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Croatia

59. Budimir Loncar, former Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic

60. Jan Kavan, former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic

Hungary

61. Ambassador Balázs Csuday, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Vienna, Hungary

62. János Martonyi, Former Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs

Albania

63. Fatmir Mediu, former Minister of Defence