North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO, Russia Military Chiefs hold talks on Afghanistan, Ballistic Missile Defence and Syria

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Moscow, 14 December - General Knud Bartels, Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, paid an official visit to Russia from 12 to 14 December to boost military-to-military cooperation and develop a common understanding on issues of strategic interest with Colonel-General Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

The General began his visit at a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where he paid tribute to the Russian soldiers killed during World War II, and to the courage of all soldiers who die fighting for their country.

He then held talks with Colonel-General Gerasimov at the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. General Bartels praised the very good level of cooperation between NATO and Russia and expressed his appreciation for the important role played by Russia in ensuring ground lines of communication to Afghanistan and supporting counter-piracy activities in the Horn of Africa. "There are several military-to-military areas where we work together and we deliver mutual benefit. And our work plan will further strengthen those areas next year," Bartels said. On 4 December, the foreign ministers of the NATO-Russia Council approved a work plan for 2013 which foresees cooperation in even more areas.

The generals also discussed Ballistic Missile Defence. Bartels reiterated that NATO missile defence is not directed against any country but intended to defend against potential threats emanating from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. He also stressed that cooperating on missile defence is crucial in order to overcome new threats and old suspicions at the same time. "While we are both cognizant of our different views on Ballistic Missile Defence, discussions will continue by appreciating each other's standpoints. And I welcome Russia's willingness to continue dialogue on finding ways to improve trust, confidence and transparency," General Bartels said.

Addressing issues of global security, the generals exchanged views on the situation in Syria. In a spirit of mutual trust and transparency, General Bartels stressed that NATO Foreign Ministers decided to augment Turkey's air defence capabilities on 4 December in order to defend Turkey's population and territory. He underlined, "NATO's ultimate task is the protection and defence of our members." The generals agreed to continue their dialogue on this issue.

The visit ended with a lecture at the General Staff Academy, where he engaged in an exchange of views with the officers in an academic environment on NATO-led operations, role and future. General Bartels emphasized, “Mutual trust, transparency and reciprocal acts are the good basis to progress cooperation.”

Delivering his final remarks, General Bartels concluded: “If I can walk away from my visit having achieved a personal, open and transparent relationship with the Russian Military leadership, then the visit has been a success. We are here today to confirm our strong cooperation and partnership. Confirm our NATO-Russia Council cooperation menu and push our relations to a new stage. We agreed to take the discussions - also the difficult ones – further. We also agreed to keep consulting each other and keep close contacts on matters of importance.”

The Chiefs of Staff of the NATO-Russia Council are scheduled to meet in Brussels in January 2013. General Bartels will chair the meeting.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. During those 15 years, NATO and Russia have developed strong practical cooperation in areas of common interest.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2012/12/14/nato-russia-military-chiefs-hold-talks-on-afghanistan-ballistic-missile-defence-and-syria