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Special Edition interview with H.E. Ambassador Liselotte Plesner,
Permanent Representative of Denmark to NATO, conducted by Editor
in Chief

Your Excellency Ambassador Plesner, we are very much honored to have this interview with you. Thank you for giving us this occasion.

Q 1: The first question is about Denmark's leadership in NATO, and the military concept of 'Denmark's Security is deeply rooted in NATO' proclaimed by Danish Ministry of Defence. Please give us a panoramic view of Denmark's leadership in NATO and what this concept means for the role and commitments that Denmark holds in the Transatlantic security and defence.

Thank you, it is always a pleasure to talk about the importance of NATO and this is a great opportunity to create awareness about Denmark's work and active role within NATO.

We are a small country, and we cannot face our security challenges alone. NATO is the guarantor of our security and by virtue of its role as a value-based organisation the guarantor of our way of life.

In 1949, NATO was founded on the same principles and values as we stand for today, and it is essential for **Denmark together with allies** and other like-minded countries to uphold and protect our values such as democracy, individual freedom, and the rule of law as laid out in NATO's founding Washington treaty.

Safeguarding the rules-based international order is also important for the Alliance. This is why **NATO** is currently working on the forward-looking agenda NATO2030. We see a fundamental shift in the global balance of power, and NATO needs to be fit to match the derived consequences as well as the challenges that persist. Euro-Atlantic security depends on strong transatlantic bonds and we are therefore looking forward to this year's summit and to recommitting to our special bond and shared values.

NATO 2030 and the upcoming summit come at a pivotal moment for the Alliance. The current security environment is both complex, unpredictable, and the most challenging since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Systemic competition with countries that do not share our democratic values and undermine the rules-based international order as well as terrorism, disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks and climate change all require constant adaptation and agility.

Consequently, Denmark has actively sought to respond through the Alliance by continuously increasing our shared focus on the capabilities required by NATO to maintain our collective deterrence and defence.

Denmark has contributed substantially to NATO operations and missions throughout the years, including through the command of NATO Mission Iraq, the present contribution to NATO's missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo, and regular contributions to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltic Sea Region and NATO Air Policing. Denmark has been ready to contribute, also, to difficult operations and missions to the benefit of Allied security. I believe that our contributions and continuous engagement has given us the reputation as a constructive and capable ally.

Through 72 years of being an ally in NATO, Denmark has seized opportunities to translate our commitment into operational actions. We believe in the transatlantic bond and the foundational values we all share and every day we go to work with the intention of letting our actions and decisions reflect this belief.

Q 2: Since 1949 as one of the founding members of North Atlantic Treaties, Denmark has been a crucial contributor to NATO, both by troops and funds. Could you speak about some of the recent past, and recent years' NATO missions that Denmark has been participating in?

As already touched upon, Denmark has contributed to many NATO operations and missions and all of them deserve to be emphasized. However, I will limit myself and only highlight three.

Firstly, **Denmark currently holds the command of the NATO Mission Iraq** (NMI), which is a training and advising mission. The purpose of the mission is to advise and train the Iraqi security apparatus so that they are capable of securing peace and preventing ISIS from re-emerging. As such, NMI works in complementarity to other international missions such as the Coalition's Operation Inherent Resolve and the EU and UN advisory missions (EUAM and UNAMI). Denmark took over the command of NMI in November last year and will lead the mission until mid-2022. It is an important responsibility, but many years of experience in international operations make us capable of fulfilling this task. In addition to our leadership, we also contribute with a number of military and civilian advisors as well as a mobile force protection unit and a transport helicopter detachment. Furthermore, as decided at NATO's Defence Ministerial meeting in February, and by virtue of our current leadership, Denmark will oversee a strengthening of NMI in accordance with Iraqi desires and needs. We are very proud of the trust placed in us by our allies, and I think this really underscores how our allies regard us as a capable ally.

Secondly, I will highlight the Danish contribution to NATO's efforts in Afghanistan over the past 20 years. Danish troops have been employed as part of both the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) throughout NATO's campaign. Whilst ISAF also provided security in Afghanistan and assisted the Afghan security forces in the conduct of security operations, the two missions were tasked to train, advise, and assist the Afghan security and defence forces as well as to compliment other national institutions.

Denmark has contributed whole-heartedly to this endeavour, and, when necessary, Danish troops have fought courageously alongside our allies and partners. Through an immense effort by all allies and partners together with Afghanistan, we have achieved our goal of not letting Afghanistan become a safe haven for terrorists, and we honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice, including 44 Danish soldiers. As an Alliance, we have followed the principle of going in together, adjusting together, and, when the time was right, leaving together. On the 14 April 2021, the Foreign and Defence Ministers of the Alliance decided to end RSM and start a new chapter of our partnership with Afghanistan. The end of RSM does not mean that NATO will leave Afghanistan behind. Allies and partners will continue to stand with Afghanistan, and from a Danish perspective, we expect to maintain our diplomatic presence and a solid civil engagement.

Thirdly, to secure stability closer to home Denmark contributes to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (**eFP**) in Poland and the Baltic States and has done so since 2018. EFP was established to enhance NATO's deterrence and defence posture and is a strong demonstration of Alliance solidarity. The presence of almost all NATO allies makes clear that an attack on one ally will be considered an attack on the whole Alliance. Specifically, eFP consists of four multinational battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States respectively. This multinational force amounts to almost 4,000 troops and form part of the biggest reinforcement of NATO's collective defence in a generation. Since the beginning of eFP, Denmark has contributed to the British lead multinational battlegroup in Estonia. In 2018 and 2020, Denmark contributed with up to 200 soldiers, and we will continue to contribute with staff officers through 2021. We expect to send out a similar, company-size, contribution in 2022.

Q 3: In the Domain of NATO's Air Policing Mission, Denmark is playing a highly vital and invaluable role from the beginning of this operation in 2004. What accomplishment has been achieved so far and how do you see the importance of this operation for Denmark, as well as for its Nordic and Baltic neighbors?

It is important for Denmark to uphold security and stability in our own backyard, including in the Arctic and in the Baltic Sea Region. Therefore, we have frequently contributed to NATO's Air Policing in Iceland and **NATO's Baltic Air Policing**.

Iceland is a close and important ally, and with several contributions to NATO's Air Policing in Iceland (also known as Iceland Peacetime Preparedness Needs, IPPN) we have assisted in safeguarding Iceland's air space and territorial integrity. When Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania joined the Alliance in 2004, it was essential to assist them in upholding their sovereignty in airspace. Providing equal protection to all allies is an important measure to demonstrate our solidarity, resolve, and collective defence.

We participated with the first Danish contribution to NATO's Baltic Air Policing in 2004 and have contributed seven times since then with F-16 Fighter Aircraft and personnel. Most recently in 2019, we contributed with four F-16 Fighter Aircraft and around 60 personnel on the air base in Siauliai in Lithuania. We expect to be there again this autumn. The primary tasks for the Danish F-16 Fighter aircraft are to conduct patrols and be prepared for any violations of airspace. The Danish fighter aircraft along with allied fighter aircraft assigned to NATO's Air Policing mission are often launched to visually identify Russian Air Force aircraft. A high proportion of the Russian flight activity is due to the geographical location of the Russian enclave Kaliningrad, since Russian aircraft regularly fly from the mainland to Kaliningrad and back.

As you might know, NATO's Air Policing was expanded in 2014 after Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, with a second air policing presence in Estonia under NATO's Assurance Measures. I believe this demonstrates solidarity and contributes to the security and stability in the Baltic Sea region, which is increasingly affected by Russia's destabilizing and aggressive actions. The situation in the Baltic Sea region requires our presence, not least in NATO's airspace, to ensure safety and security and we are proud to contribute to that. Our collective protection of the Alliance's airspace is a strong sign of solidarity in action.

Additional news: [Denmark reaffirms its commitment to command NATO Mission Iraq, May 2021 \(NATO\)](#)

[The Royal Danish Armed-Forces \(U.S Europe World Affairs\)](#)

Special Edition Interview with Captain Erik Anthony, USAFE-AFAFRICA Public Affairs Spokesperson

Sir, it's a great pleasure to have this interview with you. Thank you very much indeed for accepting our invitation.

Q 1: Can you please describe the strategic mission and the intercontinental role of USAFE-AFAFRICA?

As the air component for both U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command, USAFE-AFAFRICA executes the Air Component missions with forward-based airpower and infrastructure to conduct and enable theater and global operations. USAFE-AFAFRICA directs air operations in a theater spanning three continents, covering more than 19 million square miles, and containing 104 independent states. Our mission is: “to forward project power across air, space and cyber domains, defend United States interests, demonstrate warfighting readiness, and forge partnerships in support of United States European Command and United States Africa Command Campaign objectives.”



Q 2: How do you see the alignment of strategic security of the Baltic and Arctic region with USAFE-AFAFRICA's mission?

The alignment of strategic security of the Baltic and Arctic regions is crucial to our mission. We remain committed to security throughout the Baltic and Arctic regions and a Europe that is whole, free, prosperous, and at peace. Strong relationships and continued interoperability with our allies and partners in these regions increases defense cooperation, improves the independent defense capabilities of Baltic nations and contributes to strengthening NATO's deterrence and defense postures in the High North and on NATO's Eastern Flank.

Through continued training, exercises and exchanges, we work alongside our allies and partners to build interoperability across all domains and bolster stability and security in the Baltics and in the Arctic.

In recent years, the bonds between the U.S. and our friends in these regions have only grown stronger, and our long-standing relationships span a broad range of mutual security, economic, and global interests.

Q 3: Was Spartan Warrior 20-9 also in the framework of NATO? Can one measure the achievement of operational objectives up to the present?

Yes. **Spartan Warrior is a multinational exercise** that strengthens distributed training capabilities among NATO nations. Spartan Warrior 20-9 utilized the USAFE-AFAFRICA Warfare Center's facility and various facilities around the world. This allowed for robust simulation assets to introduce air and ground scenarios for U.S. and NATO participants. The scenarios tested the players' abilities in countering threats while building cohesive protocol for real-world events.

Q 4: In mid-January, U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa participated in a Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) with NATO allies and partners in the Black Sea region.

Can you please discuss the most significant aspects of the JADC2 training?

It's increasingly crucial that we maintain the decision advantage and turn data into information quicker. JADC2 seeks to create agile and resilient command and control systems, capable of operating through degraded environments. The inherent flexibility and capability of our forces, bolstered by JADC2, allow us to maintain the right presence where we need it, when we need it.

Q 5: Please tell us about the recent BTF and its envisaged operational goals?

B-2 Spirit aircraft from the 509th Bomb Wing, Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, flew the final mission of the most recent Bomber Task Force deployment on March 25, 2021. This iteration of the BTF consisted of B-2s and B-1B Lancers from the 7th Bomb Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, Texas.

The B-1s accomplished a number of historic firsts and operational goals during this deployment. They were the first bomber to deploy to Norway, land in the Arctic Circle and land in Poland where they conducted the first hot-pit refuel of a B-1 in Europe, demonstrating a critical Agile Combat Employment capability. From Norway, the B-1s flew nine sorties, integrating with ally and partner assets to include Norwegian F-35 Lightning aircraft, Swedish JAS-39 Gripen, Danish F-16 Fighting Falcons, Polish F-16s and German and Italian Eurofighter Typhoons which also supported NATO's Baltic Air Policing. The B-1s also worked alongside U.S. special operations forces to provide critical support to Norwegian and Swedish joint terminal attack controller training.

On March 16, B-2s joined this iteration of the BTF, flying their first of four missions in the High North. The B-2s integrated with the B-1s and the Norwegian F-35s that supported NATO's Icelandic Air Policing mission off the coast of Iceland. The aircraft carried out complex operations at night after beginning the mission from three different bases on two continents. The sortie provided an opportunity for the aircraft to advance their cross-platform data-sharing capabilities, improving 5th generation interoperability.

Strategic bomber missions enhance the readiness of the U.S. Air Force, which is necessary to respond to any potential crisis or challenge across the globe.

Q 6: Could you also comment on the partnership of USAFE-AFAFRICA and the Norwegian Air Force?

The U.S. and Norway collaborate closely on many global, regional and bilateral issues. Norway is an exceptional **NATO** ally thanks to its investment in high-end capabilities and commitment to peace and stability in Europe and the Arctic. Norway generously contributes to regional leadership and global stability, to include serving as NATO's sentinels in the North as well as its continuing support of **NATO's Resolute Support** Mission in Afghanistan and the Defeat-ISIS Coalition.

Additional: **Spartan Warrior 20-9: NATO strengthens air power**

Inspirational Speech

If you want to change the world

If you want to change the world, find someone to help you paddle. Over a few weeks of difficult training my SEAL class, which started with 150 men, was down to just 35. There were now six boat crews of seven men each. I was in the boat with the tall guys, but the best boat crew we had was made up of the little guys — the munchkin crew we called them — no one was over about five-foot-five.

The munchkin boat crew had one American Indian, one African American, one Polish American, one Greek American, one Italian American, and two tough kids from the midwest. They out-paddled, out-ran and out-swam all the other boat crews. The big men in the other boat crews would always make good-natured fun of the tiny little flippers the munchkins put on their tiny little feet prior to every swim. But somehow these little guys, from every corner of the nation and the world, always had the last laugh — swimming faster than everyone and reaching the shore long before the rest of us.

SEAL training was a great equalizer. Nothing mattered but your will to succeed. Not your color, not your ethnic background, not your education and not your social status.

If you want to change the world, measure a person by the size of their heart, not the size of their flippers.

*Excerpt from the speech of Hon. Naval Adm. William H. McRaven, Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, delivered at the University of Texas commencement 2014

The University of Texas at Austin

Founded in 1883, is one of the world's top universities ranking the 40th.

Acknowledgments:

Excerpt from the speech of Hon. Adm. William H. McRaven in University of Texas in 2014
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Image 1: Image of H.E. Ambassador Liselotte Plesner, Permanent Representative of Denmark to NATO ©Denmark's mission to NATO. Image 2: F-15E Strike Eagle assigned to the 492nd Fighter Squadron takes off for exercise Agile Liberty at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, April 19, 2021. ©U.S. Air Force/Airman Jacob Wood.

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