

# WebMemo



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## President Obama's Second European Tour: U.S. Priorities for the Transatlantic Alliance

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President Obama heads to France and Germany this week on his second tour of Europe. The White House has announced that he will make stops on June 5 in Germany and June 6 in France. Specifically, he will visit the former Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald, the Landstuhl Regional Medical Facility (close to the U.S. Ramstein Air Base), the city of Dresden, and the beaches of Normandy, where he will commemorate the 65th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

This trip follows the G-20 summit in London and the NATO summit in Strasbourg-Kehl, where President Obama failed to significantly advance his policy agenda. Although this visit will be heavier on symbolism than policy announcements, the President must treat this visit as a working trip and advance his top-line issues.

When President Obama meets with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, he must request additional combat troops—with fewer national caveats—for the NATO mission in Afghanistan, as well as a commitment to increasing sanctions against the world's number one state sponsor of terrorism, Iran. He must also use these meetings as an opportunity to advance American interests with regards to NATO, which is currently negotiating a new Strategic Concept and struggling to reach consensus on the issue of enlargement.

**Afghanistan.** Immediately preceding the NATO summit in April, President Obama unveiled his new “surge” strategy for Afghanistan. He committed

21,000 additional troops and trainers and outlined a regional strategy for combating terrorism and winning the war in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> The timing was not a coincidence: Although his “Af-Pak” strategy was clearly meant to be American-led, it was also designed to coincide with a supposedly renewed commitment by NATO's continental allies to the mission in Afghanistan, to be announced at the summit.

Yet despite President Obama's high personal approval ratings in Europe, he was unable to secure additional continental European combat troops. Only Britain pledged more combat forces: Up to 1,000 additional British soldiers will join the 8,300 others already serving in Afghanistan, largely in the south.<sup>2</sup> In total, other European nations committed just 5,000 non-combatant troops, 3,000 of whom will deploy solely for the August election in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

President Obama must make securing additional combat troops with fewer operational caveats for the mission in Afghanistan one of this trip's primary objectives. Indeed, whether the trip is to be considered a success depends, to a large extent, on his ability to do so. National caveats such as those that restrict German troops to the North of Afghanistan

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severely weaken the overall war effort and increase the burden on other allies. The President should also seek diplomatic endorsement for America's joint efforts with Pakistan in rooting out militant sanctuaries and combating Taliban and al-Qaeda strongholds, which support the insurgents' efforts in Afghanistan.

The Heritage Foundation's Lisa Curtis states that President Obama is committing "the time, resources, and U.S. leadership necessary to stabilize the region and contain the terrorist threat in South Asia."<sup>4</sup> He should not have to do this with only the U.K. at his side. At the NATO summit, France was given one of NATO's two supreme commands and, in exchange for this bigger seat at the alliance's table, Sarkozy must step up and help ensure the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan. President Obama is sending the message to his domestic and international audiences that he intends to win in Afghanistan, and France and Germany should support that endeavor by shouldering a fair share of the burden.

**NATO.** President Obama must present an agenda for leadership of the world's most successful multilateral alliance. The President must advance American interests on a wide range of complex issues within the alliance, including negotiations for a new Strategic Concept, enlargement, and the resetting of NATO-EU relations.

*Strategic Concept.* The Strasbourg-Kehl summit produced a "Declaration on Alliance Security," which paved the way for a new Strategic Concept in 2010/2011.<sup>5</sup> Redefining the purpose and role of the transatlantic alliance in the post-9/11 world will allow the alliance to confront both existing and

emerging issues. NATO should commit to confronting such security challenges as terrorism, cyberterrorism, ballistic missile attacks, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It should also reaffirm the necessity of winning in Afghanistan. This process will allow NATO to rebuild the team concept within the alliance and unequivocally answer any questions related to its commitment to Article 5's collective defense clause.

*Enlargement.* The Obama Administration should position itself as a champion of NATO's Open Door Policy and specifically endorse both the immediate accession of Macedonia and the granting of Membership Action Plans to Georgia and Ukraine. NATO enlargement has been a success story, both for the alliance and for the accession states; withdrawing the prospect of NATO accession from aspiring countries will jeopardize the West's post-Cold War gains and betray the founding principles of NATO.

*NATO-EU Relations.* The reintegration of France into NATO's military command structures has given impetus to European demands to redefine the NATO-EU relationship. As it works through various proposals, the U.S. should be guided by the following principles:

- NATO's primacy in the transatlantic security alliance is supreme;
- There should be no duplication of NATO assets, including any separate EU operational planning and command capabilities;
- NATO must maintain at least one supreme command in the United States;

1. Brian Faler, "Senate Passes \$91 Billion Funding Bill for Wars, IMF," Bloomberg, May 22, 2009, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=azrugelHilAg&refer=us> (May 29, 2009).
2. Michael Lea, "NATO Allies Join UK in Pledge to Send More Troops to Afghanistan," *Daily Mail*, April 4, 2009, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1167181/Nato-allies-join-UK-pledge-send-troops-Afghanistan.html> (May 29, 2009).
3. Hans Nichols and Edwin Chen, "Obama Says 5,000 More NATO Troops Will Be Sent to Afghanistan," Bloomberg, April 4, 2009, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601091&sid=aEs0wpr5bLLM&refer=india> (May 29, 2009).
4. Lisa Curtis, "Afghanistan and Pakistan: Understanding and Engaging Regional Stakeholders," testimony before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, March 31, 2009, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/tst040209a.cfm>.
5. Declaration on Alliance Security, issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg-Kehl, April 4, 2009 at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52838.htm?mode=pressrelease](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52838.htm?mode=pressrelease) (May 29, 2009).

- NATO must reserve all resources exclusively for NATO missions; and
- The assets and resources for exclusively European missions must be provided in addition to—not instead of—the members' contributions to NATO.

**Iran.** On June 5, President Obama will visit the Buchenwald concentration camp and the Landstuhl medical facility, which treats U.S. soldiers injured in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> His great-uncle, Charles Payne, was among the American troops who liberated Ohrdruf, a satellite forced-labor camp close to Buchenwald.<sup>7</sup> President Obama will see firsthand the sacrifices of American troops—past and present—who have gone to war in defense of freedom and liberty. He will also be reminded of the horrors of the Holocaust, which saw the systematic, state-sponsored murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis.

With the dramatic backdrop of the Holocaust, President Obama should seek support for confronting those regimes that engage in or promote ethnic cleansing and genocide, in particular, Iran. Tehran has threatened to “wipe Israel off the face of the earth” and continues to thumb its nose at the international community as it advances its nuclear enrichment and ballistic missile programs.<sup>8</sup>

As President Obama commemorates one holocaust, he must take serious action to stop another. Specifically, he should press Chancellor Merkel to join him in ramping up sanctions against Iran and express alarm at Berlin's significant increase in exports to Tehran. In 2008, German exports to Iran increased by 10 percent, totaling 4 million euros, making Germany Iran's largest European export partner.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, President Obama must pressure Germany to end its massive exports to

Tehran, which shamefully prop up an odious regime committed to Israel's destruction.

**The Special Relationship.** As he stands on the beaches of Normandy, President Obama should take in the magnitude of the Allied landings that began on June 6, 1944. The D-Day landings were an overwhelmingly Anglo–American operation: Of the 156,000 troops that landed in Normandy, 73,000 were American and 61,715 were British.<sup>10</sup> As such, President Obama should pay homage to the Special Relationship, which continues to operate successfully in theatres of war around the world today.

Through diplomatic channels, President Obama should also make it clear to President Sarkozy that he welcomes the participation of Queen Elizabeth II in the commemorations. The Queen, the only reigning monarch to have actively served in World War II, has suffered an unconscionable snub in being left off the invite list for the ceremonies. Following the President and First Lady's successful visit to Buckingham Palace in April, the D-Day landing commemorations will afford Obama a further opportunity to solidify his relationship with Europe's longest-serving monarch and reinforce the value of the Special Relationship.

**Missile Defense.** In November 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy injected himself into the negotiations among Warsaw, Prague, and Washington over the deployment of elements of the U.S. missile defense shield in Europe. Standing next to Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, Sarkozy called for a temporary moratorium on the “third site” deployments, despite being a signatory to two NATO communiqués endorsing the deal.<sup>11</sup>

The third site deployment of 10 interceptors in Poland and a radar in the Czech Republic is a deal

6. AFP, “Obama to Visit U.S. Forces Hospital in Germany,” May 28, 2009, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jGwj5slLweST9HwqtKccqzwDv39Q> (May 29, 2009).

7. John McCormick, “Obama Relative Recalls World War II Horror,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 2009, at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/politics/obama/chi-obama-great-uncle-08-may08,0,6675721.story> (May 29, 2009).

8. Ewan MacAskill and Chris McGreal, “Israel Should Be Wiped off Map, Says Iran's President,” *The Guardian*, October 27, 2005, at [www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1601413,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1601413,00.html) (May 29, 2009).

9. Assaf Uni, “Israeli Envoy: Germany Increasing Exports to Iran, Despite Sanctions,” *Haaretz*, December 9, 2008, at <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/1044837.html> (May 29, 2009).

10. The D-Day Museum, “D-Day and the Battle of Normandy: Your Questions Answered,” at <http://www.ddaymuseum.co.uk/faq.htm> (May 29, 2009).

behind which President Obama must stand. Concluded in the final months of the Bush Administration, the third-site deal represents a boon to transatlantic security and a means of advancing NATO's fledgling efforts toward a future alliance-wide missile defense architecture. President Obama must make it clear to President Sarkozy that he supports the third site deployments and will not tolerate him running interference on behalf of Moscow.

**The Need for Tangible Policy Gains.** This second European trip (which will be closely followed by

a third when President Obama attends the G-8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, in July) takes place while Obama still enjoys high approval ratings in Europe and claims to have built up political capital and credibility among Europe's leaders. President Obama must now transform that popularity into tangible policy gains that advance transatlantic interests.

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11. Marc Champion, "Sarkozy Urges U.S., Russia to Delay Missile Defense," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 15, 2008, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122671339527430157.html> (May 29, 2009).