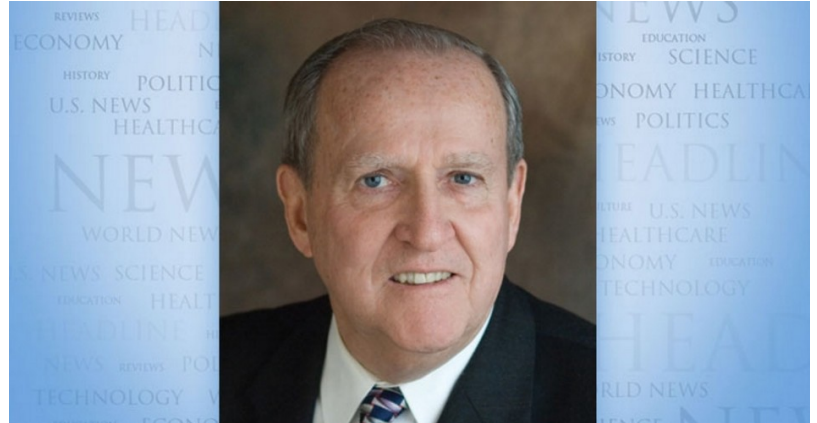




Written by [John F. McManus](#) on March 10, 2016

NATO: A Military Entangling Alliance

On February 10, 2016, defense ministers from the 28 member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met in Brussels at the organization's headquarters. NATO Secretary General, Norway's Jens Stoltenberg, announced unanimous approval of a plan to beef up the alliance's presence in Eastern Europe.



One day later, Stoltenberg revealed that participants in the alliance agreed to deploy ships in the Aegean Sea to aid refugees fleeing from war-torn Syria. He anxiously told reporters that the new mission was "not about stopping or pushing back refugee boats." It was a humanitarian venture.

Asked about U.S. participation in the new mission, American General Philip Breedlove, NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe, said that he and his staff would be figuring out how to accomplish the task before them. Breedlove said, "This mission has literally come together in the last 20 hours, and I have been tasked to go back and define the mission. We had some very rapid decision making, and now to go out and do some military work."

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It all sounds very nice. Humanitarian needs arise and people work together to keep desperate refugees from harm, even from losing their lives in rickety boats and rafts. But there's another issue that no one seems willing to discuss. We think it's worth mentioning. It is that U.S. forces are being directed by other than U.S. superiors. They should not be ordered here or there by other than America's leaders.

Created in 1949, NATO was sold to the Congress and the American people as a military force able to block any additional conquests of the Soviet Union. Its real purpose was to place the forces of several nations [under United Nations control](#). From its outset, the alliance has derived its legitimacy from Articles 51-54 of the United Nations Charter. It is and always has been a UN "regional arrangement," a UN subsidiary.

The action noted above includes a general of the United States Air Force receiving his orders from a Norwegian politician. Sadly, no one other than ourselves wants to point this out. Not only will U.S. forces under General Breedlove be carrying out a mission assigned to them by Jens Stoltenberg, other U.S. forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere follow orders issued ultimately by other foreign military and civilian officials.

The issue we raise is not whether someone who has the ability to do so should take on the responsibility of rescuing or guiding desperate refugees fleeing the horrors of war in their homelands. The issue is that, if American forces are employed in carrying out such a mission, their leaders should be Americans. And whatever mission they undertake should fall within the legitimate parameters contained in the U.S. Constitution and congressional action in accord with the Constitution. Placing American military



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personnel under the command of anyone but an American leader is a betrayal of their intent to serve our nation. If some wish to be policemen of the world, they should turn in their uniform and find some other way to do their will.

America's forces are currently serving in 130+ separate nations. Various alliances and commitments, NATO being the most obvious, have given a green light for U.S. forces to be involved in just about every spat large or small. The Constitution does not permit our nation to be the "[policeman of the world](#)." And NATO, sold as something other than what its creators really wanted, is an entangling alliance the United States should leave.



John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#). This column appeared originally at the [insideJBS](#) blog and is reprinted here with permission.



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