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NATO: A TWO-TIER ALLIANCE?

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U.S Defence Secretary Robert M. Gates has issued a warning that NATO is becoming a “two-tier alliance”, with some allies willing to fight and die while others, predominately continental Europeans, remain combat-shy. The big issue is NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, which, while at some 40,000 troops is struggling to contain the Taliban insurgency.

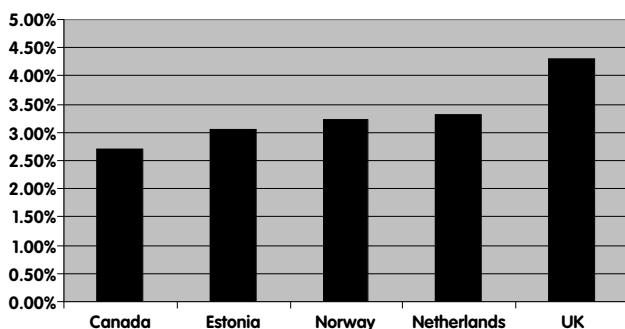
But how do the numbers look? Out of the 41,700 troops in ISAF, the U.S has by far the greatest number of troops in ISAF with 15,038 followed by the UK (7,753), Germany (3,155), Italy (2,358), Canada (1,730), and the Netherlands (1,512).

If one compares ISAF deployments with over-all force sizes, then a different picture emerges. The UK comes out on top with 4.29 % of active forces deployed, with the Dutch at 3.32%, Norway with 3.22%, Estonia with 3.05% and Canada with 2.70%

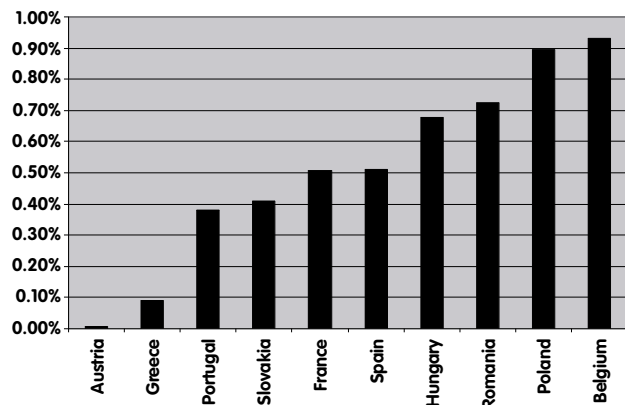
The slackers – those European countries with smallest percentage of forces deployed in ISAF - are Austria (0.01%), Switzerland (0.01 %), Ireland (0.03 %), Greece (0.09 %) and Finland (0.29%).

If the neutral and non-EU countries are removed, the ten foot-draggers in ISAF besides Austria and Greece are: Portugal (0.38%), Slovakia (0.41%), France (0.51%), Spain (0.51%), Hungary (0.68%), Romania (0.72%), Poland (0.90%) and Belgium (0.93%).

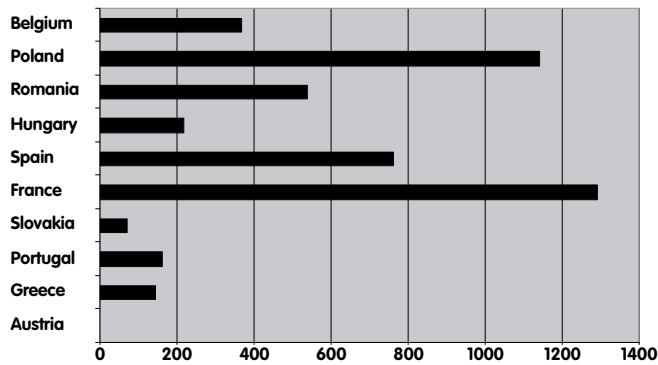
Best in Class (by percentage of active forces)



Worst in Class (by percentage of active forces)

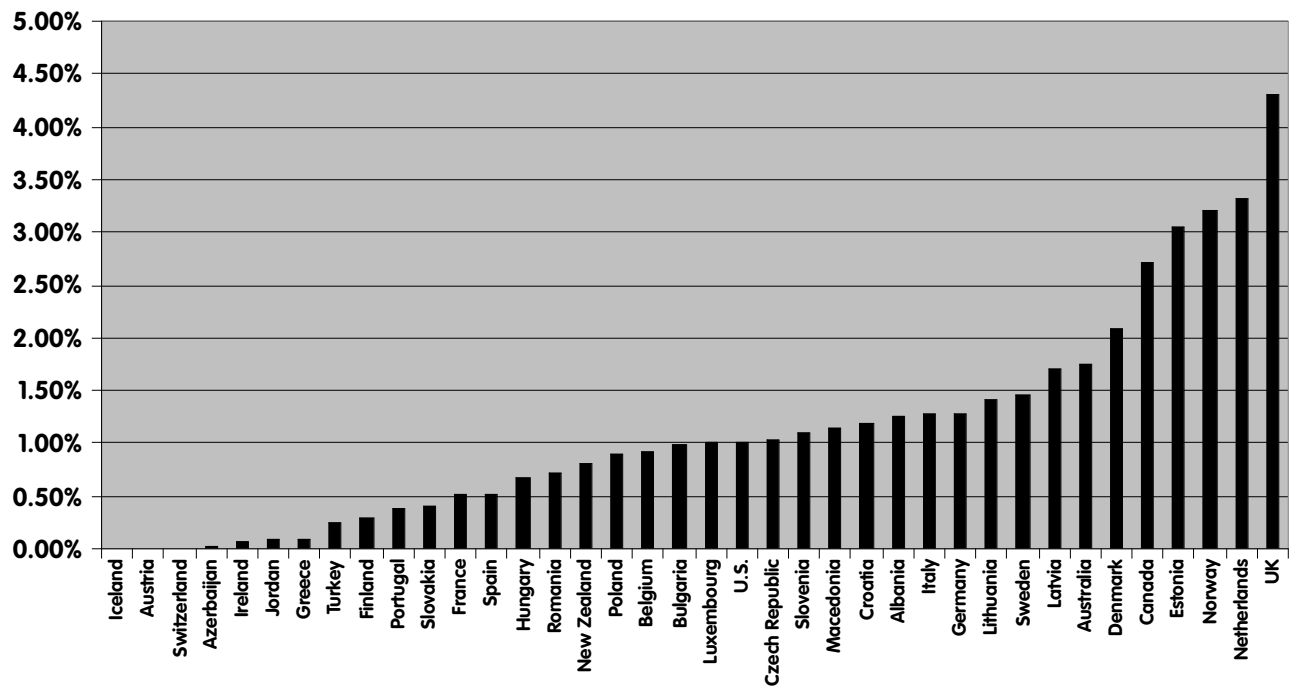


Worst in Class (by troops)



The U.S may have the largest number of troops in ISAF, but as a percentage of their national capability they are in the middle (1%) sandwiched between Luxembourg (1% also) and the Czech Republic (1.04%).

Class Photo (by percentage of active forces)



Not all active forces are meant to be deployable, of course. NATO guidelines suggest that 40% of forces should be deployable (i.e. trained, equipped, funded, etc.) with 8% actually deployed.

Bibliography

ISAF troops from "ISAF Placemat", 5 December 2007, Kabul
 The Military Balance, IISS, February 2008, London