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Russia seeks clarification on NATO role in Afghanistan

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Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov met with the NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Monday in a bid to seek clarifications concerning the role of NATO after the Alliance's scheduled pullback from Afghanistan in 2014.

Lavrov and Rasmussen discussed the general state of relations between Russia and NATO in light of high-level agreements between them and decisions of the Lisbon summit of the NATO-Russia Council, The Voice of Russia reported.

The Russian Foreign Ministry reported earlier that at the meeting the sides "will exchange opinions on priority aspects of the development of Russia-NATO relations, the situation in Afghanistan (in particular, in the context of the upcoming NATO debate on the tasks and format of the new mission of the alliance after 2014)."

In the meantime a statement posted on NATO website quoted Rasmussen as telling Lavrov that NATO and Russia should build on the significant progress that was made in practical cooperation between the two sides last year.

In 2012, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) took forward cooperation in a number of key areas, such as training counter-narcotics officers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, training maintenance crews for the Afghan Air Force helicopter fleet, and expanded transit facilities through Russia for the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan.

In December, NRC Foreign Ministers agreed on a work program for 2013, which expands existing projects and also builds on cooperation in areas such as counter-piracy and counter-terrorism.

According to the NATO statement, Rasmussen told Lavrov that implementing the mutually work program for 2013 in a timely and efficient manner will enhance security for all members of the NRC.