

**Press conference**  
**by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg after a meeting of NATO**  
**defence ministers**

*14 February 2018*

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Good evening.

We have just finished a very productive meeting of Defence Ministers. Where we took major decisions to modernise the NATO Command Structure. It is the backbone of our Alliance. And it enables our twenty-nine nations to act as one. It allows us to run our missions and operations. And to train and act in case of crisis. With the right forces, in the right place, at the right time.

At the end of the Cold War, NATO had 22,000 staff working in 33 commands. Today, the command structure is reduced to fewer than 7,000 staff in 7 commands. But the security environment in Europe has changed, and so NATO is responding. Last November, Defence Ministers agreed in principle to the design for an adapted NATO Command Structure. It will place greater focus on maritime security, logistics and military mobility, and cyber defence.

And today, we decided on the key elements of the new NATO Command Structure:

- We will establish a new Joint Force Command for the Atlantic. To help protect sea lines of communication between North America and Europe.
- We will establish a new support Command for logistics, reinforcement and military mobility. Improving the movement of troops and equipment is essential to our collective deterrence and defence.
- We will also designate some additional land component commands in Europe. To further improve coordination and rapid response for our forces.
- We will also set up a new Cyber Operations Centre at our military headquarters in SHAPE, to further strengthen our defences.

In June, Defence Ministers will decide on timelines, the locations of our new commands, and the increased staff levels that will be required.

Earlier today, we had a productive and forward looking discussion on burden sharing. We all agreed that we have made great progress but there is still much work to be done. In 2014, Allies agreed to move towards investing 2% of GDP on defence within a decade. They also agreed to invest more in key military capabilities. And to contribute to NATO missions and operations. In other words: more cash, capabilities and contributions. Allies have decided to report annually on their progress. And today, we took stock of the progress in implementing the Defence Investment Pledge. After years of decline, since 2014 we have seen three years of increasing defence spending across Europe and Canada. Amounting to an additional 46 billion

US dollars. And the national plans show that in the coming years, we can expect further increases.

In 2014, only 3 Allies spent 2% of GDP or more on defence. This year, we expect 8 Allies to meet or exceed the target. And by 2024, we expect at least 15 Allies will spend 2% of GDP or more on defence. This is an encouraging start. But we have to do more.

On capabilities, European Allies and Canada invested 19 billion US dollars more on major equipment over the last three years. This will make our forces more effective.

On contributions, almost all Allies intend to maintain or increase their participation in operations, missions and activities, both NATO and non-NATO.

So we are moving in the right direction. And I look forward to even more progress in the years ahead.

This is about our credibility: delivering on what all Allies agreed in 2014.

It is about fairness: with all Allies taking their fair share of responsibility for our defence.

And above all, it is about our security in a more complex and unpredictable world.

And with that, I'm ready to take your questions.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** Wall Street Journal.

**QUESTION [Wall Street Journal]:** Mr Secretary General, on burden sharing, what is your message specifically to Allies who are... do not have a plan to get to 2%? Are you urging them to add more money to their budgets? To revise their plans? What are you specifically asking them to do? And secondly, on the sort of cash capabilities and contributions, if you meet the 2% in cash, is that... does that sort of give you a pass on capabilities? And if you're contributing to all NATO missions, are you able to sort of say, OK, you can come under... a little bit under the 2% on cash?

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** My message is that they had to do more. We all had to do more because we have to continue to increase defence spending and move towards spending 2% of GDP on defence. That was what 28 Allies, because that was the number of members in 2014, agreed back in 2014, and I expect of course all Allies to make good on that pledge. The good thing is that, according to the national plans, all Allies are committed to increase defence spending as a share of GDP. And the number of Allies meeting the 2% guideline has increased from three in 2014, to eight this year, and at least 15 in 2024. But this is the first round with national plans and I expect more plans, I expect them to be adjusted and we will discuss them every year in the years to come, and it will be one of the major... main topics at the Summit in July. Then, it's not the... then, we have to remember that we decided on spending; cash, capabilities and contributions. It's not either cash or capabilities or contributions, it's and, meaning that you cannot choose between either one or the other, we have to deliver all three of them. And they are also interlinked, because to be able to deliver the capabilities we have promised and to deliver the necessary contributions, we need more investments in defence budgets, and all Allies agreed today on the importance of continued investment in defence and I also refer to the fact that, for many of

them, they have decreased defence spending for many, many years, for 25 years, since the end of the Cold War. So, just the fact that they have stopped the cuts and started to increase is a turn... turning a corner and is... and means that the direction of travel is clear, but we have to continue to move in that direction.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK, we'll go to the back, gentleman in the back.

**QUESTION [Polish Defence 24]:** Secretary General, you've mentioned land component commands, what is the role of this commands and what will they do in the future command structure of NATO?

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** The land component commands will be part of NATO's force structure and they are addressed as we now adapt and change our command structure. We have not made any firm decisions on where to locate the new land component commands, that is part of the process which is going on now, but we have decided that we need some more... or some new land component commands. I know that several nations have put forward proposals that they are ready to host new land component commands. Of course they will be important because they will command land forces, be key in the force structure and part... so, will be important for NATO and NATO Allies, but as I said, what we decide today is the structure, then we will, as we move towards the meeting of Defence Ministers in June, decide the geographical footprint, where to locate the new commands, and also the exact manning level in the new command.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** Jane's.

**QUESTION [Jane's Defence]:** Yes, Brooke Tigner, Jane's Defence. Coming back to defence spending and tracking how capabilities are developed, you've made several previous references to the CARD, these upcoming Coordinated Annual Review and Defence. That, if it takes off as expected, that could be a very powerful tool for tracking and shaping capabilities on the European side, one main reason being that it will be every 12 months. So, I'm wondering if NATO should not consider shortening its on DPP process in order to better track capability development at the individual Ally level. Thank you.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** The NATO Defence Planning Process is a well established process. It's a two year cycle and it has worked very well, and especially now, because actually all nations have agreed to the capability targets and the fact that nations are now investing more in defence means also that they have more money for meeting the capability targets. So, it's a close link between what we decided on spending and on capabilities. We cannot achieve new capabilities, or the necessary capabilities, we cannot meet the NATO capability targets without spending more. That's obvious. So, that's one of the reasons why we have decided to spend more, to provide more capabilities. The NATO Defence Planning Process is a well established process. It has served the Alliance very well for many years and I think that's one of the key reasons why NATO is working so well, because we have many small- or medium-sized Allies, which cannot provide all the different capabilities you need to provide a credible deterrence and defence. But together we can, and

the way we achieve that they're working together, that they have the different capabilities that can fit together, is to the Defence Planning Process.

**QUESTION:** But should that be shortened?

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** Well, we have no plans of changing that process, but what we have stated very clearly is that it has to be coherence between the NATO Defence Planning Process and the EU capability planning efforts, because we cannot end up with two competing lists. We cannot end up with NATO presenting one list of capabilities, of brigades, divisions, drones, planes, ships, and then the EU ending up with a different competing list, to the same nations. That will not work. And more than 90% of the people living in the EU, they live in a NATO country and we share 22 of the same members, so this has to be a coherent approach, and I'm absolutely certain that that will be the case because the EU members of NATO have clearly stated that they don't want competition between NATO and the European Union. That will be the same as competing with themselves. Why should they start to compete with themselves? They are members of both organisations and they will really be the losers if they end up with two competing structures, with two competing capability targets and lists. So, this has to be coherent and not only is it necessary that the capability development processes are coherent, meaning that we ask for the same capabilities, but also we need to make sure that the capabilities that are the result of this process are available for NATO, because we don't have two sets of forces, we only have one set of forces. But given that we have a coherent capability development and given that new capabilities developed in European, EU, or the EU member countries, are available for NATO, then this is good because then this will strengthen the European pillar inside NATO. And that's exactly the message from European leaders, that this is not an alternative to NATO, not something that will compete with NATO, but this is complementary to NATO, it will strengthen the European pillar inside NATO. That has been expressed by me, but it has also been strongly impressed... expressed by European leaders, so I am absolutely certain that we will be able to coordinate the efforts of the European Union and NATO.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** We've got a couple of questions in the front row. We'll start in the middle and then we'll go to the other two ladies.

**QUESTION [Kommersant Publishing House]:** Thank you. Kommersant Publishing House, Russia. My question is not about money, I am sorry. Recently, there were some reports that China is building now a military base in the northeast of Afghanistan, in order to control Uyghur militants in this area. So, do you know anything about that plans and is there any coordination between NATO command in Afghanistan, and China? Thank you.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** NATO supports the National Unity Government in Afghanistan and this is a sovereign nation with a sovereign government, and we support and encourage that government to also work with partners in the region. Actually, we think it's impossible to solve the crisis in Afghanistan without close cooperation with also the other countries in the region, and China is one of them. But it's not for NATO to decide on whether China is going to have any kind of military presence in Afghanistan, that's for Afghanistans to decide. And therefore, as long as we support the government, respect the decisions of the Afghan government, then I think the important message is that this is up

for... it's for the Afghan government to decide. We have seen the reports, but it's not for me, in a way, to have any... to give advice on that, it's for the Afghan government to decide.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK, lady over there.

**QUESTION [Russian radio]:** On 5th February, the Lithuanian Defence Minister made a statement about the Iskander permanent deployment in Kaliningrad and Rose Gottemoeller, which was visiting at this time, Lithuania said that this important information should be checked. So, did the NATO check this information and how it will react to it? Thank you.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** Well, Russia has stated many years ago that they planned to deploy Iskanders permanently to Kaliningrad, or in Kaliningrad. We have seen some deployments there before, but they had then been taken back, so no permanent deployment have we seen so far. What we have seen is that they have stated that they will do so and we have seen that they are investing in infrastructure and that they are strengthening their military presence in Kaliningrad, but whether they have now deployed Iskanders is something I won't comment on, that's intelligence and I will not comment on our intelligence on these issues, but I will only call on Russia to be transparent. And that's one of the reasons why we also think that the NATO-Russia Council is useful, because we use the NATO-Russia Council to brief on military exercises, but also military posture. So, we call on Russia to be transparent. We have seen what they have stated earlier. They are investing in infrastructure and they are militarising Kaliningrad. But on the specific question of Iskander, I will not comment.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** Lady over there.

**QUESTION [LETA News Agency, Latvia]:** I wanted to ask about NATO's command structure organisation and how, in your view, it could affect or help NATO's enhanced forward presence in Baltics.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** The command structure will help their Enhanced Forward Presence in a way that the command structure strengthens our... NATO's ability to reinforce, to move forces, because the adaptation of the command structure is very much focused on military mobility and logistics, both when it comes to the Atlantic, the ability to move forces and equipment across the Atlantic, but also within Europe. Because there are two new Joint Force Commands, a Joint Force Command for the Atlantic and a Joint Force Command for logistics enablement. And of course, both of these commands are relevant for the Enhanced Forward Presence for the Baltic countries because if there is a need we will have to reinforce and then we need a proper command structure, to do that in an effective way.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK, we'll go to Europa Press.

**QUESTION [Europa Press]:** Thank you. Ana Pisonero from the Spanish news agency, Europa Press. Considering the new command structure for the South specifically, do we have anything else, other than the hub? How will the new command structure specifically deal with the Jihadi strikes from the South? By when do you think the hub will be fully operational? I know that certain Allies, like Italy and Spain, are really pushing for it. I also understand that the way how to calculate the contributions to missions, inside the cash

capabilities and the contributions packet, is not decided yet, so I'd like to know by when do you think that decision will be done?

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** Which decision?

**QUESTION [Europa Press]:** The decision to see how to calculate the input of the contributions to missions. And I think that in your latest visit to Madrid you mentioned that the CAOC in Madrid could possibly be reinforced in the new command structure and take up new functions. I don't know if there's any details that you could give us there. I understand that the... to have standing air command capabilities is going to be also a capability that we need in the future. Thank you.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** The adaptation of the NATO command structure is absolutely relevant for the South and the threats and the challenges we see emanating from the South. Because the focus on how can we make sure that the lines of communications across the Atlantic, including infrastructure cables, are safe, is of course also important for the South. And both when I visited Madrid, but also Portugal a couple of weeks ago, this was one of the issues we discussed, the importance of the Atlantic linking Europe, and I mean the whole of Europe, the North and the South of Europe, to North America. So, the new Atlantic Command is relevant also for the southern part of our Alliance. The same with the new command for logistics and enablement, that is also relevant because if there is a crisis, if there is a need, we will also deploy ... move forces to the southern part of our Alliance. So, this is a 360°, it's a command structure which is ready, able to respond to threats/challenges for... from all... from any direction. Then we have the new cyber centre, which is also of course relevant for the South. So, I think it's... we make a mistake if we think that the some of the new components are in anyway earmarked for a specific direction. They are 360°, if needed we will use them, regardless of from where the threat is coming. Second, we have the hub for the South. It's not fully manned, so we are now working on making sure that it's fully manned as soon as possible. And for instance, that we will be also more focused on maritime issues, is highly relevant for the South, both with the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and also parts of the Atlantic. And then the CAOC, I don't have anything more to add there than what I said in Madrid.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK. Deutsche Welle.

**QUESTION [Teri Schultz, Deutsche Welle & NPR]:** Teri Schultz for Deutsche Welle and NPR. You had a meeting with the Turkish Defence Minister today, did you get any clarification, did you ask for any, on the S-400 deal? And also, can you update us on Turkish plans in Northern Syria and whether they see the tensions declining? Thanks.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** So, we discussed the Turkish air defences and we discussed the different elements. We discussed the fact that NATO is augmenting Turkish air defences with our Patriot batteries and SAMP/T batteries, which are deployed there by Turkey... no sorry, by Italy and by Spain, part of the NATO presence in Turkey. We also addressed the development of the procurement of the S-400, but we spent most of the time when we discussed Turkish air defences, to address the progress they are making when it comes to a deal, or agreement, with the Italian and French consortiums,

Eurosam, or SAMP/T, to procure air defence systems from European NATO Allies. They have signed a memorandum of understanding. They have started to work together. I welcome that. It's a national decision, what kind of air defence system Turkey wants to buy. But what matters for NATO is, of course, whether it's going to be integrated into NATO's Integrated Air Defence System. And it's obvious that Eurosam, a French/Italian system, is easy to integrate. While S-400, there has been no request for integration and it's obvious that that will be a difficult issue. ... [inaudible] we discussed also that of course, and Turkey expresses strongly their concerns about the situation in Northern Syria. I reiterate that NATO sees that, or recognises that Turkey has legitimate security concerns. No other NATO Ally has suffered more terrorist attacks than Turkey. They are also hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees, but we expect them to act in a measured and a proportionate way. We discussed how NATO can contribute to the fight against terrorism. We addressed NATO's support for the Coalition to defeat ISIS, our AWACS planes, which are actually based in Turkey, and also the different assurance measures we have delivered to Turkey, and the training of Iraqi officers. But NATO is not present on the ground in Northern Syria. Turkey briefed the North Atlantic Council a week ago on the military operation in Afrin, and I expect them to continue to brief us and I also welcome the fact that Turkey and the United States are also talking directly to each other, to address the challenges we see in Northern Syria.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** Polish News Agency.

**QUESTION [Polish Press Agency]:** I would like just to clarify the procedure of assigning the new command centres geographically. So, I understand the decision has already been made on the military and political level, you just wait with the announcing that. And how would you comment to the information issued by Deutsche Press Agency last week that one of the commands will be near Cologne or... Cologne or Bonn?

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** We have decided today on the structure, meaning that we will... there are many, many elements, it's a big document, but some of the main elements are that we will have a new Atlantic Command, focusing on the sea lines of communications across the Atlantic, important for NATO since we are a transatlantic alliance. And we will also have a new Joint Force Command for what we call logistics, support and enablement, which will focus on logistics, military mobility, in Europe. The location of the two new commands, we have decided to have them, to establish them, but we have not decided where they... where we will locate them. That will be a decision that we'll take as we move towards the next Defence Ministerial meeting in June. Germany has offered to host the new support command and United States has offered to host the new Atlantic Command, but we have not taken any final decision as an alliance - that will be the next phase of our adaptation.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** Last question goes to the front row.

**QUESTION [Daily Press Montenegro]:** Serbia recently criticised decision of Montenegro to send troops to KFOR mission in Kosovo, saying that it should have asked Belgrade before taking that decision that will hurt regional security. So, my question is, Serbia is a partner of NATO and it claims that it respects the decision of Montenegro to be a member of NATO. So, in this case, what is your message to Belgrade? And also a quick question, this is fourth

ministerial after joining NATO, so I would like to hear from you how satisfied are you with Montenegro's contribution to the NATO? Thank you.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** We are very satisfied with Montenegro's contributions to the Alliance and it's good to have Montenegro at our table and I really welcome them. And to have Montenegro at the table shows the strength of the Alliance, we are now 29 Allies, and to have Montenegro there is also a contribution to stability and peace in that part of Europe, in the Western Balkans. And I have also had the pleasure of visiting Montenegro several times and I really welcome to have them as an Ally. Montenegro decides, and Montenegro has decided, to send troops to our KFOR mission in Kosovo. I welcome that. We have a close partnership with Serbia, I welcome also that. I think that for NATO to have a close partnership with Serbia is important. We have welcomed Aleksandar Vučić, the President, here to the NATO Headquarters, I've met him in Belgrade, and we continue to strengthen the partnership with Serbia. And for me, there is absolutely no contradiction between having Montenegro as a full member and at the same time developing a strong partnership with Serbia. We respect of course the decision of Serbia not to aspire for membership in NATO, but we welcome the decision of Serbia to work for an even closer partnership with NATO. So, this is something we welcome.

**OANA LUNGESCU [NATO Spokesperson]:** Thank you very much. We'll see you tomorrow.

**JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]:** Thank you.

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