

**Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following  
the meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in Defence Ministers'  
session**

*07 Jun. 2018*

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Good evening.

We have just finished a very productive meeting of NATO Defence Ministers.

The first in our new headquarters.

We have decided further steps to strengthen our shared security.

And boost defence and deterrence against threats from any direction.

We are adapting the NATO Command Structure, the military backbone of our Alliance.

Today, ministers agreed to strengthen the new command structure by more than 1,200 personnel.

We also agreed that our new Joint Force Command for the Atlantic will be based at Norfolk, Virginia in the United States.

And that a new Enabling Command will be based in Ulm in Germany.

To ensure we have the right forces in the right places at the right time.

These headquarters will be essential for Alliance reinforcements.

Across the Atlantic and across Europe.

And I thank the United States and Germany for their leadership in hosting these commands.

Ministers also agreed a NATO Readiness Initiative, the so-called 'Four Thirties'.

This is not about new forces.

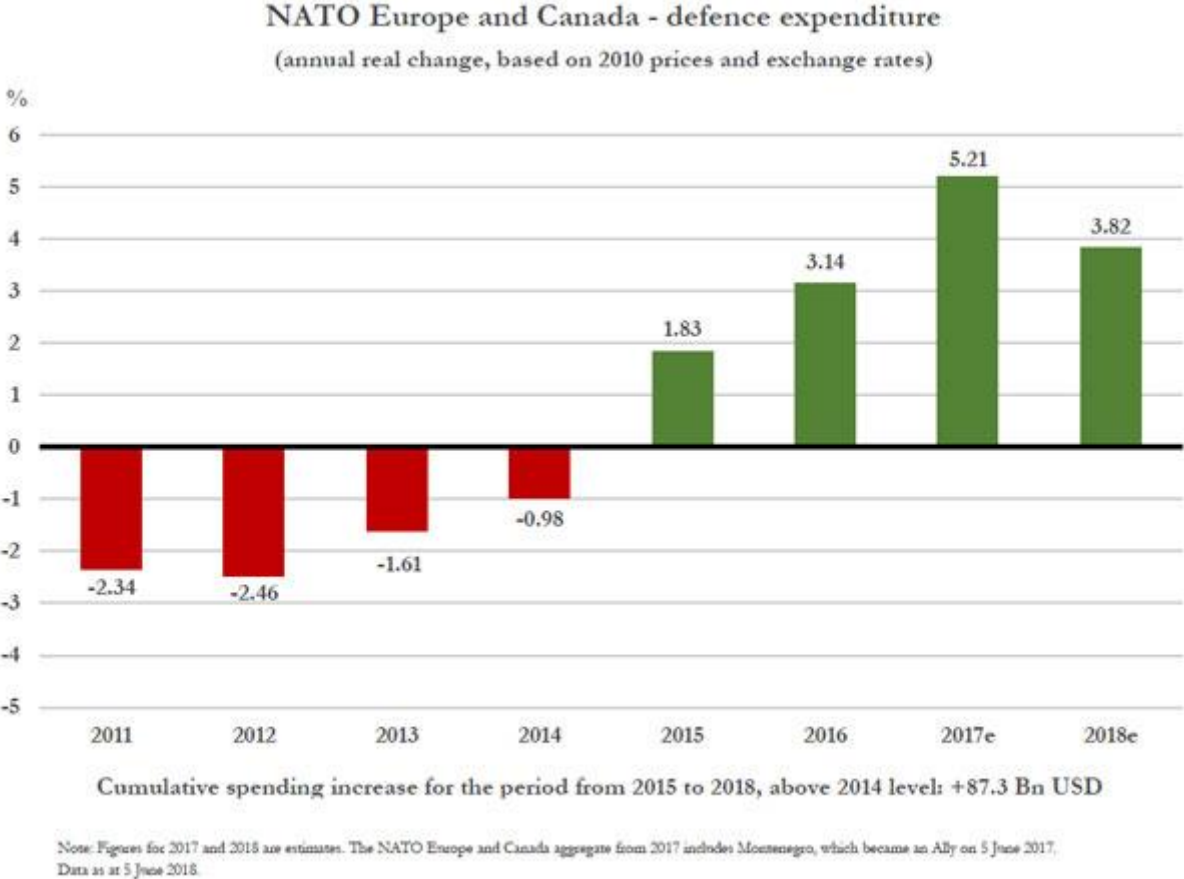
But about increasing the readiness of the forces our nations already have.

Today, Allies committed, by 2020, to having 30 mechanised battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 combat vessels, ready to use within 30 days or less.

This shows our determination to instill a culture of readiness across the Alliance.

We also addressed burden sharing. Which underpins everything that we do. Allies are making real progress on all aspects of burden sharing. Cash, capabilities and contributions.

When it comes to cash, today I can announce the first estimated figures for 2018.



As you can see from this chart, we now have four consecutive years of real increases in defence spending. All Allies have stopped the cuts. All Allies are increasing defence spending. More Allies are spending 2% of GDP on defence and the majority of Allies now have plans to do so by 2024. Across European Allies and Canada, we expect a real increase this year of 3.8%. This means that, since 2014, European Allies and Canada will have spent additionally 87 billion dollars on defence. When it comes to capabilities, Allies have committed to investing 20% of their defence spending on major equipment. This year, fifteen Allies are expected to meet the guideline. And I count on more to do so in the coming years.

Allies have also stepped up their contributions to NATO missions and operations.

But of course, we still have more work to do. Burden sharing will be a key theme of our Summit next month. And I expect all Allies to continue their efforts. Ministers also addressed the progress we are making in cyber defence. Following the cyber pledge made at the Warsaw Summit in 2016, Allies have enhanced their cyber capabilities. We have also decided to set up a Cyber Operations Centre, as part of the new Command Structure. And having agreed the principles last year, we have now agreed a framework for the integration of sovereign cyber effects into Alliance operations and missions. This supports NATO’s overall deterrence and

defence. Because all crises today have a cyber dimension. And we must be as effective in cyberspace as we are on land, at sea and in the air.

The decisions we have taken today pave the way for a successful Summit in July, with more investment, more equitable burden sharing and a strengthened defence posture.

We are adapting NATO for the future.

And with that, I am ready to take your questions.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** And please introduce yourselves and your outlet. Let's start in the first row, please?

**Question:** Good evening. Just two questions, if I may. The first one is on Italy and Russia because President Vladimir Putin said he was glad that something is moving in the EU on the sanctions. I wonder if you have any comment about this. And the second one is, may you please make a point on Italy commitments on defence spending? I mean are they on the right track and do you expect the new government to make good on the promises taken? Thanks.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** Italy is a valued and important Ally and Italy is contributing to our shared security in many different ways. I welcome that Italy has started to increase defence spending, but I also welcome the fact that Italy is contributing to NATO missions and operations in many different ways. Italy is one of the countries with the largest contributions to our missions and operations, for instance, in Afghanistan where Italy is one of the lead nations. But also to our maritime operations. In Kosovo and elsewhere, we see Italy contributing with professional, committed personnel which we really appreciate. And I would also like to highlight the fact that Italy is hosting, is a host nation for different NATO facilities, like the Joint Force Command in Naples and also the Sigonella base and other NATO facilities.

Then on the sanctions, I would say that NATO is not aiming at isolating Russia. Actually, we strive for a better relationship with Russia and the whole Alliance stands behind what we call a dual-track approach to Russia, which is about deterrence defence, but also about dialogue because Russia is our neighbour, Russia is here to stay and we need to try to improve our relationship with Russia. At the same time, I believe that the sanctions are important because they send a clear message to Russia that when they violate international rules, when they violate the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of a neighbour, as they have done in Ukraine, then it has consequences. And that's the reason why the international community has responded with sanctions, and I support that. The sanctions are not, you know, decided by NATO but NATO Allies have welcomed and supported the sanctions because it has to have a cost, it has to have a consequence, when international rules are violated.

Then I look forward to meet the Italian Prime Minister on Monday and also the Foreign Minister and Defence Minister, so I look forward to go to Italy and to have a meeting with the new government. And I congratulate the Prime Minister with his appointment.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** BBC, please.

**Question [BBC]:** Yes, Secretary General, thank you very much. Jonathan Marcus from the BBC. Two questions: Quick point on the spending; the last bar in the chart you put up had obviously gone down, there was a trend upwards and the last bar had gone downwards. Is that

just a blip for that particular year or are you worried that the trend in increased spending... thank you, the trend in increased spending is tailing off? And then the second question; there's an awful lot of emphasis on mobility and reinforcement and so on. Of course, an alternative approach is to actually have forward-basing. Would you make some comment on the document that came out of the Polish Defence Ministry, their desire apparently to have a US division forward- based in Poland? Is that something that has been discussed within NATO circles today?

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** Spending in 2018 is going up. It's green and it's plus almost 4%, so we continue to increase. And the increase in 2018 comes on top of the increase we had in 15, 16 and 17. So, I think if... so, this is about continued increase on top of the increase we have already seen. And this is in stark contrast to what we saw before NATO made the Defence Investment Pledge. Because then actually defending... spending was going down, now it's going up, also in 2018, and it's a substantial increase in real terms.

Second, this is the first estimate and in the previous years we have seen that the figures have improved throughout the year. So, of course we don't know for certain, but if we follow the same pattern as we for instance saw last year, then the increase will be even stronger at the end of the year. So, I underline the importance of... that we continue to do more to strengthen, or to increase the increase further. But this is plus, this is more, this is increase on top of the increase we have already seen.

Then there was no discussion about any... the Polish proposal, but what we have seen is that NATO has increased its presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, including in Poland, over the last years. For the first time in NATO's history, we have combat troops, or we have battlegroups in the Baltic region and in Poland. We have a US-led battlegroup in Poland and of course we have also other kinds of presence in Poland, with different commands, including in Szczecin. And we have... we are now actually in the process of building the missile defence site in Poland. So, there is NATO presence in Poland in different ways. What we see is that the US is increasing their presence in Europe, and that's part of NATO's collective defence. We have seen 40% increase in US funding, just under the Trump... in the period that Trump has been President, for what they call the European Reassurance Initiative, with more troops and more exercises, more prepositioned equipment. So, there is an increase of US presence and an increase of NATO presence in the eastern part of the Alliance and I welcome that because that shows that the transatlantic bond, the North America... the presence of North America in Europe is not going down, it's actually going up.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK, we'll go to Reuters in the last row, please.

**Question:** Thanks, Oana. Robin Emmott from Reuters. You talked about wanting to have a successful Summit. Do you feel that these numbers that you've presented, and based on your trip to Washington, will be enough to mollify President Trump, given his strong focus on the 2%? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** President Trump has welcomed these figures because he has really recognised that this is progress, that this is more money for defence across Europe and in Canada. And he has spoken about that money is pouring in, with reference to these figures, showing that defence spending has started to increase.

And we speak about that we have really turned a corner because until recently defence spending was going down, now we have four years of increase. All Allies have stopped the cuts, all Allies have started to increase, more Allies will spend 2% of GDP on defence this year, and the majority have put forward plans. I'm not saying that this is enough, but we didn't promise to be at 2% within the year, we promised to stop the cuts, gradually increase and then move towards spending 2% of GDP within a decade. And we have started this. This is a good start. We need to do more. We need to have further increases, but this is a good start where we see that European Allies are stepping up, and I welcome that.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK. We'll go to the lady in the second row.

**Question:** Ukrainian Media Inter. I have a little follow-up on Italy, where a newly-appointed minister raised today a question about lifting sanctions. And the main question is about Ukraine, whether you have any understanding in which format the meeting Ukraine-NATO can take place in the framework of the Summit in July? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** President Poroshenko will be invited to the NATO Summit. We haven't yet decided the exact formats and the exact types of meeting, but he will be invited. Not least because we also have... we have decided already that we will have a meeting of the Resolute Support partners. So, it remains to be seen exactly what kind of formats we will have at the Summit, but President Poroshenko is invited.

Then, I think that it is for the new Italian Minister to say what she said during the meeting, it's not for me to, in a way, refer to specific interventions. I welcomed Minister Trenta because this was her first meeting in a NATO Ministerial, but I can say that there was no discussion about sanctions in the meeting.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** We'll go to the gentleman over there. Thank you.

**Question [Belarus Security Blog]:** Thank you and good evening. Belarus Security Blog, I'm Andrei Porotnikov. I have a question about Eastern Flank. It's very sensitive thing for my country, so the question is have NATO any plans to send new additional troops or forces to Poland and Baltic States? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** We have already increased our presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. Our focus now is on our ability to reinforce, if needed. So, that's the reason why we have tripled the size of the NATO Response Force and also the reason why we today agreed on this Readiness Initiative. But then we speak about forces which are in their home countries. The NATO Response Force is based on, you know, contributions from different Allies, but the forces are in their home countries, but then they can move quickly, if needed. So, the focus of NATO now is on how can we reinforce any part of the Alliance, if needed, in the east or the south or the west or north or wherever it's needed, with our... with NATO Response Force, but also with the forces which we now are going to identify as part of the Readiness Initiative. Also, the changes we are making in the Command Structure is very much about reinforcements, both the Atlantic Command and Support Command in Germany is about our ability to move forces. So, that's the focus of NATO now, the ability to reinforce, if needed.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** OK. Gentleman over there. Thank you.

**Question:** Thank you, Mr Secretary General. This is Mehmet Solmaz from Turkey's Daily Sabah. My question is regarding a recent court decision from Greece. Previously, four of eight Turkish soldiers who were participated in the attempted failed coup in 2016 were released and in the... in the previous few days we have seen that the remaining four have also been released, making it all... all the soldiers who fled the country with a military helicopter to Greece were all released now. Do you have a message to... especially to Greece? And do you think these kind of steps undermine security cooperation between the two NATO Allies, Turkey and Greece? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** So, we are aware of the challenges and I have discussed this both with President Erdoğan in Ankara, but also this is something I have discussed with the Greek government and representatives from the Greek government to the different ministries. I think that my main message today is the importance of showing your restraint and calm, because it is important to try to solve these issues and therefore restraint and calm is my most important message today.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** Agence France-Presse.

**Question [Agence France-Presse]:** [Asked in French]

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** Many ministers highlighted the importance of NATO unity and that we have to stay united, especially when we see that Russia tries to divide us. And therefore unity within the Alliance is our most important message as we prepare for the upcoming Summit next month. And that was stressed and underlined by several ministers, or many ministers in the meeting today. At the same time, we all recognise that there are differences, disagreements between NATO Allies on issues like trade, the Iran deal or climate change. But we have seen before that despite these kind of differences, NATO has always been able to unite around our core task, and that is to protect each other. And that's also what we see now. There are differences, but NATO stands united. And not only do we see a NATO which is united, but we see actually a NATO which is able to strengthen our cooperation and transatlantic bond. Because, despite the differences we see between NATO Allies, we see... on issues like trade, we see a NATO which is delivering on strengthening our collective defence, the biggest reinforcement to our collective defence since the end of the Cold War, stepping up our efforts to fight terrorism and where we see that European NATO Allies are investing more in defence, Canada is investing more, and then we see that United States is increasing their presence in Europe. So, I recognise that there are differences on issues like trade, but at the same time I see a NATO which is delivering on strengthening the transatlantic bond and strengthening our collective defence.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** Thank you very much. This concludes this press conference. We'll see you tomorrow. Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** Thank you.

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