

PRESS CONFERENCE BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG AHEAD OF THE NATO SUMMIT BRUSSELS

10 July 2018

Good afternoon.

Tomorrow and Thursday, NATO leaders will meet here, at our new headquarters.

NATO embodies the bond between Europe and North America. Which has kept our people safe for almost seventy years.

We are an Alliance that exists to prevent conflict and preserve peace. We are an Alliance that constantly adapts to a changing world. Above all, we are an Alliance that delivers.

At the Summit, I expect we will deliver once again. In strengthening our deterrence and defence. Stepping up in the fight against terrorism. And achieving fairer burden-sharing.

Investing in defence is a matter of credibility and fairness. It is about our security in a more unpredictable world.

That is why we will discuss defence spending and burden-sharing tomorrow.

In 2014, Allies agreed to stop the cuts, start to increase, and move towards spending 2 percent of GDP on defence within a decade. Since then, we have made major progress. We still have a long way to go. So we must redouble our efforts.

Today, I can announce that we are releasing new 2018 defence spending estimates for each Ally. And they are encouraging.

They show that compared to 2014, all Allies have stopped the cuts.

All Allies are increasing spending.

Last year saw the biggest increase in a generation.

And this year will be the fourth consecutive year of real increases.

The estimates also show that we expect 8 Allies to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defence this year.

Compared to just 3 Allies in 2014.

Allies are also investing billions in new major equipment.

And stepping up their contributions to missions and operations.

So we have reversed the trend. Before, the trend was down. Now it is up.

For decades, our nations were cutting defence spending by billions of dollars.

Now they are adding billions of dollars.

I would like to thank all our nations for the efforts they are making to keep our defences strong in a more unpredictable world.

And I would like to thank President Trump for his leadership on defence spending.

It is clearly having an impact.

Last year on the President's initiative we agreed to develop national plans to raise defence spending.

Based on these plans we estimate that European Allies and Canada will add an extra 266 billion USD to defence between now and 2024.

This is significant. Tomorrow we will also take decisions to step up NATO's role in the fight against terrorism.

We will launch a new training mission in Iraq, with hundreds of NATO trainers. We will also help set up military schools. To increase the professionalism of Iraqi forces.

This will be a non-combat mission. But it will help Iraq prevent the re-emergence of ISIS and other terrorist groups.

We will also agree additional support for key partners in the Middle East and North Africa.

We will increase our support for Tunisia. With expert advice in areas including counter-terrorism and counter-improvised explosive devices. And we will step up support for Jordan. Including on cyber defence, counter-IEDs, and crisis management. Prevention is better than intervention. And helping our partners prevent and manage crises makes us all safer.

To further strengthen our deterrence and defence, we will adopt a Readiness Initiative – the “Four Thirties”. This is a commitment to have, by 2020: 30 mechanised battalions; 30 air squadrons; and 30 combat vessels, Ready to use within 30 days or less. We will agree a new NATO Command Structure. Including a new command for the Atlantic, in Norfolk, Virginia.

And another for military mobility in Europe, in Ulm, Germany.

Military mobility involves moving troops and equipment quickly, wherever they are needed.

And over the last four years, NATO has invested over 2 billion euros in infrastructure making this possible.

Including sea terminals, fuel containers, and runways.

And tomorrow, through our close cooperation with EUROCONTROL, we will also increase air mobility. Aircraft supporting NATO missions will be given a NATO Call Sign. And receive priority handling by Air Traffic Control in Europe. In peacetime and in crisis.

Tomorrow, we will also discuss NATO's response to hybrid threats.

And agree to set up new counter-hybrid support teams, to support Allies at risk. Our strengthened defences will extend into the cyber domain. With a new Cyber Operations Centre as part of the new NATO Command Structure. And the ability to draw on Allies' national cyber capabilities in NATO missions and operations.

Over dinner, we will meet with our colleagues from Finland and Sweden. As well as the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission.

Together we will discuss the main security challenges confronting the transatlantic area. Including challenges from the Middle East and North Africa, a more assertive Russia, and the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

This morning, I met with President Tusk and President Juncker.

We have just signed a new Joint Declaration setting out a shared vision of how NATO-EU cooperation can make us all stronger and safer. And contribute to fairer burden sharing.

On Thursday, we will meet with the Presidents of Georgia and Ukraine, two of our closest partners. Together we will address regional challenges. We will also discuss their defence reforms and NATO's continuing support.

We will close the Summit with a meeting on Afghanistan, joined by our Resolute Support partners.

Our presence in Afghanistan is vital to ensuring the country never again becomes a safe haven for international terrorism.

And Allies are increasing their commitment, both in forces and funding.

We have added around 3,000 more trainers to our mission.

At the Summit, I expect we will also agree to extend funding for the Afghan forces beyond 2020.

And we'll express our full support for President Ghani's bold peace initiative. And his government's reforms.

Finally, I expect that following last month's historic agreement on the name issue, we will agree to invite Skopje to start accession talks.

Once the agreement is finalised and implemented, we will be able to invite the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ to become NATO's 30th member under its new name: the Republic of North Macedonia. A strong signal that NATO's door is and remains open.

Our Summit comes at a time when some are questioning the strength of the transatlantic bond. And I would not be surprised if we have robust discussions. Including on defence spending.

Different views are normal among friends and Allies.

But I am confident we will agree on the fundamentals. North America and Europe stand together. We will take decisions to strengthen our Alliance and protect our citizens for years to come.

With that, I am ready to take your questions.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we'll go to the Washington Post in the centre. Fifth row.

Question [Washington Post]: Hello. Michael Birnbaum from the Washington Post. I wanted to ask, President Trump tweeted in the last hour, "The US is spending many times more than any other country in order to protect them. Not fair to the U.S. taxpayer. On top of that we lose \$151 billion on Trade with the European Union. Charge us big Tariffs (& Barriers)!" What is the consequence for Allied solidarity of linking trade and defence in the way President Trump is doing?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: It confirms that there are different views among Allies on different issues, including trade, but also climate change, the Iran nuclear deal and other issues. I will leave... when it comes to trade, I will leave that to the European Union. When it comes to defence, that's for NATO. And when it comes to defence, my message is that we are actually now stepping up. European Allies are stepping up, Canada is stepping up, and we are also doing more together, North America, United States, Canada, and Europe. And I'm absolutely certain that this Summit will show that we are able to deliver on security, on defence, despite the disagreements we see on trade and other issues. And one of my main responsibilities is to make sure that, as long as the disagreements on trade remain unresolved, that we minimise the negative effects on the cooperation within NATO. We have been able to do that so far and I'm confident that we'll once again be able to do that at the Summit, because we have a good story to tell. Yes, the burden sharing in the Alliance is not fair, that's exactly why European Allies and Canada are stepping up, the biggest increase in defence spending last year, since the end of the Cold War. All Allies have started to increase. More Allies spend 2% of GDP on defence. And, based on the national plans we agreed last year, we now estimate that European Allies and Canada will add 266 billion extra for defence spending, from now until 2024. So, this is significant, this is really moving in the right direction, and therefore I am confident that it will also be reflected at the Summit that we are moving in the right direction.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Süddeutsche Zeitung.

Question [Süddeutsche Zeitung]: Daniel Brössler, Süddeutsche Zeitung here. Secretary General, you said you thanked President Trump for his leadership and you said that it is clearly having an impact on the issue of the 2%. Aren't you worried that there might be a negative impact too, that the way President Trump communicates with member states might harm unity in NATO and might actually alienate the populations in some member countries from the Alliance?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: European Allies and Canada should not increase defence spending to please the United States. They are increasing defence spending because it is in their own security interest to do so. That was... that's the reason why they agreed to invest more in defence back in 2014, and that's the reason why they are investing

more in defence now. All of them. I'm not saying that they all have spent enough, but I'm saying that we have a very good start with significant increase across Europe and Canada.

Then, increased defence spending across Canada and Europe also improves burden sharing, which is a good thing. But the reason to invest is not to please United States, the reason to invest more in defence is because it's needed, because we live in a more unpredictable world. Let me also... and that strong NATO is good for Europe, but it's also good for the United States. Two world wars and the Cold War taught us that we are stronger together than alone. And the only time we invoked Article... NATO has invoked Article 5 was after an attack on the United States, 9/11, and hundreds of thousands of European soldiers and Canadian soldiers have served alongside US soldiers in Afghanistan.

So, NATO is the force multiplier for the United States. Allies have stood with the United States on battlefields from Korea to Afghanistan. And the US presence in Europe is of course good for European security, but is also good for the United States. It's a way for the United States to have a platform to project military power to the Middle East and Africa. And European capabilities are also helping to strengthen the protection of the United States. So, I believe that we, at this Summit, can show that unity, resolve, solidarity in NATO is in the interest both of America, North America, and Europe, and therefore we will continue to deliver.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we go to Al Arabiya in the centre here.

Question [Al Arabiya]: Mr Secretary General, two days before the Tunisian security services has been deadly targeted by the terrorist organisation. I'd like to ask you about there should be sure in Tunisia a kind of lack of training, lack of equipment, proper equipment to fight terrorism. What NATO is providing already? What NATO can provide in the years ahead? And my second question linked to this one, the many terrorist groups active in Tunisia came from Libya and you received many times requests from the Libyan officials to assist them in build defence institution. Given the crisis in Libya, did NATO manage to do any kind of job or organisation or planning to help the Libyan or still nothing, because of the internal situation in this country? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, we are providing some support to Tunisia already, but I expect that Heads of State and Government will agree the package for defence capacity building for Tunisia at this Summit, so then we can do more. And that's exactly addressing the issues you mentioned. It will be about helping them to fight terrorism, it's about border security, it's about intelligence, it's about countering IEDs and other areas which are important, addressing the terrorist threat. We strongly believe that working with partners as Tunisia is one of the best ways we can fight terrorism, because to train local forces, to enable local governments to stabilise their own countries is a much more viable strategy in the fight against terrorism than being forced to deploy our own troops in big combat operations.

When it comes to Libya, we are first of all supporting the UN led efforts to find a peaceful, negotiated solution to the crisis, to the conflict, but we are also ready to provide help with institution building, help them to build ministry of defence, other defence institutions, and we are working on that with the government of Libya now.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: We'll take a couple of questions from the front row. We'll start with the gentleman first, over there, yeah.

Question [InterpressNews Agency Georgia]: Mr Secretary General, before this Summit, the NATO Summit, Russian officials have constantly expressed their concerns over deepening relations between Georgia and NATO, even yesterday, based on diplomatic sources inside NATO, the leading Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported that Georgia may join NATO without a membership action plan and there are such discussions inside NATO. How would you assess such reports and what tangible results could Georgia expect from this Summit? And also, you have mentioned in your speech that the doors of NATO remain open for everyone who wants to join this organisation. So, if those doors are still open, why can't we enter? And when Georgia will be able to enter those open doors? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I am certain that the Heads of States and Government at the Summit starting tomorrow will recognise the progress Georgia is making, on reforms, on strengthening your defence and security institutions, and we will continue to provide support for Georgia. And we are also grateful for the support that Georgia provides to NATO missions and operations, not least in Afghanistan. So, we think that Georgia is really making good progress. I'm not able to give you any specific timeline, but I think that the fact that both Montenegro has joined and that we most likely will decide tomorrow to invite the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to start accession talks, shows that NATO's door is open, and we will continue to support Georgia on its way towards membership. And we also expect that Heads of State and Government will agree that the decision we made in 2008, that Georgia will become a member, still stands.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we'll go over there.

Question [Radio Free Europe]: I'm Mustafa Sarwar from Radio Free Europe. Thank you very much, Mr Secretary General. As we speak, Saudi Arabia is hosting a two day conference, peace conference on Afghanistan. How do you assess Saudis' role in the peace process in Afghanistan and can these regional efforts eventually bring the... encourage the Taliban to come to the negotiating table with the Afghan government? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I think it is important to support an Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process and that's exactly why NATO so strongly has welcomed the peace initiative taken by President Ghani. He invited Taliban, without conditions, to sit down and start peace negotiations, and he also launched a ceasefire in connection with the Eid holidays. We strongly underline that it is important with support from all countries in the region, but that support has to be to the... an Afghan owned and Afghan led peace process. The main... the reason why NATO is in Afghanistan is to fight terrorism. To do so, we need a stable Afghanistan and we will continue to be there. The purpose of NATO's military presence is to create the conditions for a peaceful negotiated solution. Taliban has to understand that they will not win on the battlefield and they have to sit down and then talk with the Ghani government and find a political solution.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Agence France-Presse at the back.

Question [Agence France-Presse]: [Interpreted] Good afternoon, sir, a question in French, if you don't mind. President Trump is quite unpredictable. When he met the North Korean leader, he cancelled a huge military exercise that was scheduled with South Korea. Do you have any fear that, before meeting President Putin and to avoid ... [inaudible] he will cancel the NATO exercise scheduled for Norway in the autumn? And what would be the consequences of such a cancellation? And another question; do you share the call by President

Tusk, with a little bit more politeness amongst Allies, if we disagree so strongly are we still called Allies? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I welcome that President Trump will meet President Putin. That's fully in line with NATO policies. NATO believes in what we call the dual track approach to Russia, combining defence with dialogue. We need to be strong, we need to be firm, we need to be predictable, and NATO Allies have invested more in defence, are increasing the readiness of our forces, and we have battlegroups in the eastern part of the Alliance. So, we show that we deliver on deterrence and defence. That is the best possible platform for political dialogue. Because we don't want a new Cold War. We don't want a new arms race. Russia is our neighbour. Russia is here to stay. And we need dialogue with Russia on many different levels, to strive for a better relationship with Russia. But even without a better relationship, it is important to talk to Russia, to manage a difficult relationship, to avoid risks, miscalculations, misunderstandings, incidents and accidents.

So, with higher tensions, more military activity along our borders, it is actually even more important with dialogue, military lines of communications between NATO and Russia, and NATO Allies and Russia. Several NATO leaders have met President Putin. NATO, for two years we were not able to convene what we call the NATO-Russia Council, but since 2016 we have been able to convene seven meetings of the NATO-Russia Council, which is a platform for direct dialogue, Russia and NATO Allies. So, I think it's absolutely the right thing that President Trump meets President Putin. I am confident that this meeting is important because dialogue is important in times of high tensions. Any measures that can reduce tensions we welcome, but of course it is important that NATO stay united and I welcome the fact that we will also be able to discuss with President Trump, ahead of the meeting with President Putin, during our dinner tomorrow night, where we have the opportunity to discuss NATO's relationship with Russia.

Then on the other question, I have said many times during the last months that yes, there are disagreements and different views, and I expect actually also honest and frank discussions during the Summit. But I strongly believe that NATO can continue to be the cornerstone of transatlantic security, despite those disagreements, partly because we have been able to do that before. There has been disagreements between Allies as long as this Alliance has existed, back to the Suez Crisis in the 50s or when France decided to leave the Command Structure in the 1960s and NATO had to move from Paris to Brussels, our headquarters had to move from Paris to Brussels, or the Iraq War in 2003. So, it's nothing new that there are disagreements between NATO Allies. And history tells us that NATO has been able to overcome those disagreements again and again.

The second reason why I believe that NATO will continue to be the cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic security is that it is in our interest to maintain NATO. It is good for Europe, but it's also good for North America. The fact that Europe, in Europe you have European forces, you have European infrastructure, which are important not only for the protection of Europe, but also for the US to project military power to the Middle East and Africa. And the fact that European forces, capabilities, are important also to help to strengthen the protection of the United States.

And the third reason why I believe that NATO will continue to show resolve and solidarity, bring North America and Europe together, is that that's exactly what we have been doing now for a long time. We have to remember that, after President Trump took office, US has increased

their military presence in Europe, with more troops, more exercises, more investment in infrastructure, prepositioned equipment. Funding for US presence in Europe has increased by 40% since Trump became President. So, actions speak louder than words. Yes, there are disagreements. Yes, there will be some open and frank discussions. But when it comes to substance, NATO is delivering and NATO is delivering that US, Canada and Europe are working more closer together. And another example of that is that today, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that Canada will stay in Latvia for four more years, leading the battlegroup there. So, that's yet another example of how North America and Europe are working together.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we have the Financial Times. Just behind.

Question [Financial Times]: Thank you very much. Michael Peel, Financial Times. Could you give us the latest figures, based on your new expenditure data, on how many countries are expected to reach the 2% target by 2025? And secondly, having put these expenditure figures out today, are you not worried that you have Germany, which of course has been a prime target of President Trump, and yet there are no fewer than 11 Allies, including 9 EU members, which were spending less as a percentage than Germany last year?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: We released these figures because we always release them at this time of the year, so that's a kind of normal cycle in NATO when it comes to publishing defence spending figures. Earlier this year, we released the aggregated number, now we release estimates for 2018 for each individual Ally. And you can see the different numbers in the press statement. In 2014, when we made the decision, only three Allies spent 2% of GDP on defence. This year, we expect eight Allies to do so; the United States, Estonia, Greece, United Kingdom, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania and Romania. You will see, if you look at the charts, that a couple of these countries, they are at, for instance 1.98, meaning that they are not, at this stage fully at a hundred, but if you read the footnote and the whole table, you will see that these countries which are not 100% at 2, but at 1.98 or something like that, they have clearly committed that they will meet the 2% target over the year, so they will do something about that. So, it's at 2% or extremely close to 2%, eight Allies. And these are the initial estimates. Normally actually they improve over the year for the whole Alliance. So then I think I answered your first question, eight Allies, so from three to eight. But the total defence spending partly depends on how many countries reach 2%, but of course it's also important what happens with the rest. And the thing is that all Allies are increasing in real terms. And when it comes to Germany, Germany is also increasing. After years of cutting defence spending, Germany has started to increase and of course what Germany does matters because Germany is so big, the biggest European economy. And last year they increased defence spending by close to 6% in real terms. This year, Germany will continue to increase defence spending in real terms. And Germany has plans to increase spending by 80%, 80% real increase in defence spending from 2014 to 2024, over a decade. So, also Germany is really moving in the right direction, but of course I expect Germany, as many others Allies, to do more.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we'll go with the lady in the front row.

Question: [Serbian National Television]: First question is about the region, of course. The role of NATO in the Balkan is becoming more important regarding the progress of Macedonia toward the membership. So, how will the policy and support of NATO to Serbia will change or develop when we get that new member of NATO in the region? And do you expect some changes in the superpowers' relations with our region after that Helsinki Summit in a few days?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Serbia is a close and highly valued partner of NATO. I appreciate very much that we have been able to step up our cooperation with Serbia. The fact that we... that I expect that NATO Allies will invite Skopje to start accession talks, will not change our relationship with Serbia. I don't expect that there will be any... I will not speculate about the outcome of the meeting in Helsinki, but I think that anyway, NATO will continue to work with the Western Balkans, because we have a history there, we have a presence there, with our presence in Belgrade, in Sarajevo, and of course KFOR. And we have many members there and we also have several partners there. Serbia will host NATO's civil preparedness exercise this year in October, in Serbia, and that just shows that NATO totally respects the decision of Serbia to not seek NATO membership. That's absolutely fine for us, but we very much appreciate that Serbia continues to work with NATO as a partner and we are grateful for the cooperation with Serbia.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Polsat.

Question: [Telewizja Polska]: I wanted to ask on American permanent the presence military in Poland. Do we expect some decision on this during this Summit? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: United States and Canada, North America, have increased their presence in Europe, including in Poland. And we have to understand that on the back of... or against a background of the fact that after the end of the Cold War, since the early 1990s, there has been a significant decrease in military presence of Canada and the United States in Europe. The last US battle tank left Europe in 2013. Now, the United States is back with a full armoured brigade. So, what we see now is a significant increase of military presence, of the US and Canada in Europe, including in Poland, partly through the battlegroup, we have four battlegroups, one in three Baltic countries and one in Poland, and in Poland it's led by the United States, but partly also through increased US presence outside the battlegroup. And the thing is that these US deployments are in different places in Europe, but they are part of a rotational presence, exercises, rotational presence, also for instance in Poland and the Baltic countries.

So, we are not planning any new decisions on our posture, but we have increased the readiness of our forces, we have increased the presence of NATO forces in the eastern part of the Alliance, including in Poland, and we will make decisions now at this Summit, to increase our ability to quickly reinforce if needed. So of course, NATO's deterrence and defence is not only based on the troops we have deployed, but NATO deterrence and defence is also based on the fact that we can quickly move in more forces if needed. Before a conflict breaks out, we need to have credible deterrence. And we will make decisions now on military mobility, on the new Command Structure, which is about also moving forces quickly, and also what we call the readiness initiative, the 30 battalions, the 30 air squadrons, and the 30 battleships, that should be ready to be used within 30 days or less. So, this is also important for Poland, but it's important for the whole of NATO.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we have one last question, and we'll go to the third row, lady over there.

Question: [Pobjeda]: Good afternoon. A few days ago, Montenegrin parliament has made decision to send troops to KFOR mission in Kosovo, but Serbia calls this decision as an unfriendly gesture. Could you comment on this decision and how NATO can stop or at least help in calming tensions between these countries caused by this decision? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: So, I welcome that Montenegro is now a member of the Alliance. I also welcome that Montenegro contributes to our mission in Kosovo. But I also welcome the close partnership with Serbia and it's absolutely possible for NATO to have a close and good cooperation with Serbia and then, at the same time, be present in the KFOR mission and also of course, NATO Allies contributing to the KFOR mission. Then I am aware that there are challenges related to Kosovo and therefore we support the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue to try to find a negotiated solution to the disagreements and the challenges we see in the relationship between Pristina and Belgrade.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Many thanks. This concludes this press conference. But of course we'll see you tomorrow, bright and early. Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you so much.

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Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_156729.htm?selectedLocale=en