

PRESS CONFERENCE

BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL AT THE LEVEL OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

(NATO Summit Brussels)

11 July 2018

Good evening.

We have just finished a substantive meeting of NATO's 29 Heads of State and Government. We have had discussions. We do have disagreements. But most importantly we have decisions that are pushing this Alliance forward and making us stronger.

In the history of NATO, we have had many disagreements. And we have been able to overcome them, again and again.

Because at the end of the day, we all agree that North America and Europe are safer together. NATO is good for Europe.

And NATO is good for North America.

So today, we agreed to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence. Step up our role in the fight against terrorism. And share the burden of our security more fairly.

I really welcome that many leaders have made announcements about new contributions to a whole range of NATO missions and initiatives.

We agreed a Readiness Initiative – the “Four Thirties”.

By 2020, we will have:

30 mechanised battalions;

30 air squadrons; and

30 combat vessels

Ready to use within 30 days or less.

We agreed a major update of the NATO Command Structure.

With more than 1,200 new personnel.

And new commands for the Atlantic – in Norfolk, Virginia;

And for support and logistics – in Ulm, in Germany.

These decisions will ensure we can have the right forces in the right place at the right time.

With higher readiness. And a greater ability to reinforce.

But many of the challenges we face blur the line between peace, crisis and conflict.

So today, we set up new counter-hybrid support teams.

NATO experts will stand ready to

Support Allies in areas like cyber defence, counter-propaganda, and energy security.

We also agreed to set up a new Cyber Operations Centre as part of our strengthened Command Structure.

And we agreed that we can draw on national cyber capabilities in missions and operations.

Instability in the Middle East and North Africa affects NATO Allies.

We are determined to preserve our gains in the fight against ISIS. And prevent them from coming back.

So today, as requested by the Iraqi government, we launched a new training mission in Iraq.

And I welcome that Canada has agreed to lead the mission in Iraq.
It will be a non-combat mission of several hundred trainers.
We will also establish professional military schools and academies for the Iraqi forces.

Today we also decided to increase our support for Jordan and Tunisia.
To further develop their capacities to tackle terrorism.

And we declared our Hub for the South fully operational.
It will help us respond more effectively to regional challenges.
In order to be prepared for the challenges we face, we need to invest more and better in defence.
We all agree that we do not have fair burden-sharing in our Alliance today.
We all agree that we need more cash in national defence budgets;
More modern capabilities;
And more contributions to missions and operations.
The good news is that we are making progress.
For a quarter of a century, many of our countries have been cutting billions from their defence budgets.
Now, they are adding billions.
All Allies are increasing defence spending.
This year, 8 of our nations have committed to devote at least 2% of GDP on defence.
And a majority of Allies have plans to do so by 2024.
Last year saw the biggest increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War.
Last year we also agreed to develop national plans on burden-sharing. And based on the national plans of European Allies and Canada, we expect 266 billion US dollars in extra money for defence between now and 2024.
This is significant. Including billions for modern, high-end capabilities.
We are also stepping up contributions to NATO deployments.
So we have turned the tide. But we need to do more.
This is about fairness. This is about credibility. And above all, this is about our security in a more unpredictable world.

NATO's door is and will remain open.
We warmly welcomed last month's historic agreement between Athens and Skopje.

And today, we agreed to invite the government of Skopje to start accession talks.
Once all national procedures have been completed to finalise the name agreement, the country will join NATO as our thirtieth member.
The decisions we have made today show that Europe and North America are working together.
NATO is delivering.
And we are determined to keep our almost one billion citizens safe and secure.

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

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we'll go to the third row, in the centre, Wall Street Journal.

Question [Wall Street Journal]: Yeah, hi. Robert Wall with the Wall Street Journal. Secretary General, there's been some talk generally in the run up to the Summit that, despite the challenge of getting to 2%, that target may not be enough and it should actually perhaps be set

higher. What's your view at this point? Would that be helpful or would that be a distraction from getting Allies to 2%?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I think we should first get to 2%, focus on that now. And that is what we have agreed, that's the pledge, and the good thing is that we are moving towards that. When we made the pledge back in 2014, it was only three Allies spending 2% of GDP on defence. This year, as I said, eight Allies have committed, and a majority of Allies have already put forward plans on how to reach 2% within a decade. So, my focus is on that. I think that we also have to understand that this is really turning the trend, because for decades after the end of the Cold War, NATO Allies were cutting defence budgets. And I have been Minister of Finance... in the 1990s, I was Minister of Finance in Norway and I was able... and I was actually very good at cutting defence budgets. But then tensions went down. Now tensions are going up. So, when we cut defence budgets when tensions are going down, we have to be able to increase defence budgets when they are increasing, as they are now.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Go to Antena 3, first row.

Question [Antena 3]: Antena 3, Romania. Secretary General, I saw the declaration and you have mentioned Romania as one of the best contributors for 2% of GDP in defence budget. Romania is asking the Allies to increase the security in the Black Sea region. In the Black Sea have been happened all the military aggressions from Russia in the last ten years, in Georgia, Ukraine and Crimea. What are the steps that this NATO Summit took to increase the security in the Black Sea region and what will be the role of the new commandment, Land Force Commandment that will be founded in Romania, as is mentioned in the declaration? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I will welcome the increase we have seen in defence spending in Romania. That is significant and, as we said, Romania is one of the countries that has adopted a budget which should provide 2% of GDP for defence. And that is really progress. We have decided that we have to follow up and implement what we call tailored-forward presence in the Romania and the Black Sea region. We are also strengthening our maritime posture, developing our maritime capabilities. And in addition to increased presence in the Black Sea region, with land forces, air forces, maritime forces, one of the most important things we have done today is to further strengthen our ability to reinforce, to move forces quickly if needed. So, of course, NATO's defence and deterrence is not only based on the forces we have, for instance, in the Black Sea region, the national forces and the NATO multinational forces, but it's also of course very much dependent on our ability to reinforce and move forces quickly. And both the increased readiness of our forces, the four 30s initiative, the fact that we have already tripled the size of the NATO Response Force, and the fact that we now are addressing military mobility much more vigilantly than before, helps us to be able to reinforce and move forces into the Black Sea region or Romania quickly if needed.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Associated Press over there.

Question [Associated Press]: Secretary General, Lorne Cook from the Associated Press. A question on Iraq, please. You mentioned several hundred trainers. Could you just flesh that out a little more, how ambitious you can be in Iraq given the circumstances, politically and otherwise. Canada said that they are prepared to send up to 250 troops to take part of trainers. Is that kind of the ceiling? Is that the limit we're at? And isn't this kind of mission more what burden sharing should be about, rather than the money and investing in defence industry?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Burden sharing is about spending, it's about contributions, it's about capabilities, so we speak about the three Cs, cash, contributions and capabilities. And of course the cash, the money, has to be put in to good work, for instance investing in new capabilities or financing contributions like training missions in Iraq. The importance of the training mission in Iraq is that we strongly believe that prevention is better than intervention, that we have to make sure that ISIL / Daesh, is not able to come back, and the best way of doing that is to train the Iraqis, to build local capacity. And the importance of the NATO training mission is that we are going to train the trainers. We are going to train the teachers and the trainers, so they can train the Iraqi soldiers themselves, build military schools and academies. So, this is what we actually now do in Afghanistan. After a big combat operation over many years, we have scaled down our presence in Afghanistan from combat to train, assist and advise. We have seen... there are many problems in Afghanistan, but at least we have seen that we have enabled the Afghans to take over responsibility for security in their own country. And that's exactly the same concept we apply in Iraq. Different countries, different challenges, but the best way to prevent NATO and NATO Allies being forced back into combat operations in Iraq, fighting Daesh or any other kinds of terrorist groups, is to make sure that the Iraqi government, the Iraqi forces, are able to prevent Daesh from coming back.

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

Question [Georgian TV]: Thank you. Georgian TV, Mr Secretary General, can we expect that there will be another separate declaration in the end of the Summit about Georgia? And what can you say about Brussels Summit declaration which was published a few minutes ago, what it says new about Georgia? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, we are planning a new declaration together with Georgia, and you can read the declaration when we publish it, but we will, in that declaration, of course reiterate our strong support to Georgia. Our political support, our practical support, and welcome both that NATO Allies are now providing more support in different ways to Georgia, with the training centre, the capacity building efforts, supporting the reforms, but also recognise the significant progress Georgia is making and the fact that Georgia is contributing to many NATO missions and operations. I can be... I can say more about this when we have published or agreed the statement tomorrow.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK. BFBS, second row.

Question [BFBS]: James Hirst from British Forces TV and Radio. Secretary General, since the end of the combat mission in 2014, the continued trend is the numbers going in the wrong direction. Afghan forces getting smaller. NATO step by step increasing the size of its train, advise, assist mission. At what point do you say, this plan isn't working, we need a new plan?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I will say that the plan is working, meaning that we have been able to hand over responsibility for security in Afghanistan to the Afghans themselves. And that's a huge difference between what we did before, because then we were in Afghanistan with a big combat mission with more than 100,000 troops. I am not saying that the situation in Afghanistan is easy. There is violence, there is terrorism, there is uncertainty, there are many challenges, and sometimes also a lot of disappointments. But at least we have seen that we have, together with the Afghans, been able to build a professional, dedicated force of Afghan police and soldiers, who are able to respond when Taliban or terrorist groups conduct attacks. So, that's a big achievement. We will continue to provide support to them, train their

Special Operation forces, we're helping them to build their air forces. We will have President Ghani here tomorrow and then we can, of course, discuss how we can develop, adjust, adopt the way we provide support to them. But the idea of the main plan to... instead of we conducting big combat operations, we are instead helping them to fight terrorism / Taliban themselves. That concept, I am absolutely certain, is the right concept. Then our presence now is conditions based and I think that's also one of the reasons why we have seen some progress in the efforts to find a political solution. Because the reason why we are in Afghanistan is to create the conditions for a peaceful, negotiated solution. At the end of the day, there is no military solution to the problems in Afghanistan, but to send a message to Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield, they have to sit down and negotiate, we need the military presence to send that clear message to the Taliban.

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

Question: [Macedonian TV]: Secretary General, we have very high rating for joining NATO in Macedonia, about 80% of the population, of the voters actually. On the other hand, we still have high rating of saying a big no for the changing of our constitutional name. So, how to solve this paradox and to join NATO?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, that is up to the people of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ to decide. This is a one in a lifetime opportunity and either they support the agreement and then they can join NATO, or they don't support the agreement, but then they will not join NATO. They cannot get both. There is no way to join NATO without changing the name. So, that's, in a way, the decision the people have to take. So, I welcome the agreement. We have clearly stated that we will start... as we have decided today, that we will start accession talks. And we have clearly stated that, when all the internal procedures have been finalised, including a change in the constitution, implementing the name agreement with Athens, then the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ can become the 30th member of NATO, under its new name, the Republic of North Macedonia. But it cannot become a member if it doesn't change its name. That's in a way the simple choice. And that's up to the people of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ to take that choice.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Gentleman in the fifth row.

Question [Axios]: Jonathan Swan from Axios. Mr Secretary General, you said earlier today you were interested to know about the President's up... President Trump's upcoming meeting with Vladimir Putin. Did he give you any assurances that he would not make concessions to Putin, for example on Crimea? And a second question, in any of your conversations with President Trump, has he ever suggested to you that he believes the United States has too many troops in Europe? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: We will discuss Russia during the dinner, but it was also mentioned in my meeting earlier today, my breakfast with President Trump, and also mentioned during the discussions today. But Russia will be on the topic for the dinner tonight. So, all Allies, and that is also stated in the declaration we have agreed today, clearly say that we don't recognise, we are not recognising, we don't recognise and we will not recognise the illegal annexation of Crimea. So, this is a unified position of all Allies and it's a position which has triggered the... The illegal annexation of Crimea is one of the main reasons why NATO has implemented the biggest reinforcement to our collective defence since the end of the Cold War. It is one of the main reasons why we have increased our military presence in

the Baltic States, Poland, and also in the Black Sea region, to send a very clear signal that anything similar to what happened in Crimea cannot happen against any NATO country. We will also continue to provide support to Ukraine, political support and practical support, and we'll meet with President Poroshenko tomorrow.

When it comes to US presence in Europe, what we have seen is that the United States has increased their military presence in Europe. After the end of the Cold War, the United States reduced its military presence. The last US battle tank left Europe in 2013. And now, the United States is back with a full armoured brigade. And just since President Trump became President, or took Office, US funding for a US military presence in Europe has been increased by 40%. So, actions speak louder than words. I am absolutely confident about the US commitment to European security and also their military presence.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Reuters. Third row.

Question [Reuters]: Thanks very much, Secretary General. Just a clarification, before we came into your news conference, some of the NATO leaders were giving their assessment of the meeting and we understand that President Trump asked NATO Allies to raise defence spending to 4%. Is this the case? And if so, what is your response? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, I will focus on what we have agreed, and we have agreed to be committed to the pledge, increasing defence spending to 2%. And let's start with that. So, we have a way to go, but the good news is that we have really started to deliver. I think that, if we go back to 2014, and ask the leaders, commentators, whether European Allies would make that much progress we have seen from 2014 up to today, I think many people would have doubted that. But the reality is that now, all Allies have started to increase, all Allies have stopped the cuts, all Allies have started to increase, more Allies spend 2% of GDP on defence, and last year we saw the biggest increase ever. On top of that, on the initiative of President Trump last May, last year, we agreed to develop the national plans as a very powerful tool, to make sure that Allies deliver on the promise to increase defence spending. And the national plans have proven to be exactly the strong and powerful tools we expected them to be, because they... the majority of Allies have already presented plans, showing how they will, step by step, move to reach the 2% goal.

So, we are delivering. There are differences, there are discussions, there are disagreements, but NATO has made decisions and we are delivering on the defence pledge. And for me, in the long run, substance is what counts. And on substance, NATO is delivering.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Thank you very much. That's unfortunately all we have time for before the leaders' dinner. So, we will see you again tomorrow. Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you.

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1. Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_156733.htm?selectedLocale=en