

**NEWS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY MATTIS AT NATO  
HEADQUARTERS, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES N. MATTIS**

*October 04 2018*

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JAMES N. MATTIS: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

As you know from the secretary general, we've just concluded a highly productive defense ministerial, where the 29 nations of our NATO alliance, representing half the Earth's economic and military might, converged to confer and determine how we will act in concert to implement decisions made by our national leaders here in July.

Every NATO ally is awake to the most complex and dangerous security element -- or environment in a generation. And let me simplify one element of that complexity regarding Russia and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

As Ambassador Hutchison has made clear, Russia must return to compliance with the INF Treaty, or the U.S. will need to respond to its cavalier disregard of the treaty's specific limits. The United States is reviewing options in our diplomacy and defense posture to do just that in concert with our allies, as always.

Make no mistake: The current situation with Russia in blatant violation of this treaty is untenable, and we discussed this situation at length during this ministerial meeting among trusted allies.

The United States is upholding its arms control obligations. Russia is not, and it is time now for Russia to return to compliance.

Regarding our ministerial work here, as Secretary General Stoltenberg said, "In an unpredictable world, allies have renewed their sense of urgency on all aspects of burden-sharing: cash, capabilities and contributions." In 2017, allies boosted defense budgets by a combined 5.2 percent, which was the biggest increase in a quarter century. 2018 is now the fourth consecutive year of rising defense spending.

Allies have committed to credible national plans, and I echo the secretary general's words: All must have a realistic path to 2 percent.

We are confident. For the first time since the Cold War, all 29 allies are spending more on defense. The 28 non-U.S. allies alone have increased spending by \$41 billion in the last two years.

In Washington, the U.S. Congress saw allies making these decisions, and we Americans mirrored the financial commitment to European security in last week's fiscal year 2019 defense spending bill.

Amid many competing priorities, American lawmakers did not reduce funding for the European Deterrence Initiative by a single cent, instead maintaining the highest levels of commitment since the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall. We have maintained the number of U.S. troops currently assigned to Europe while adding additional capability.

We quickly staffed with -- the Hub of the South at the request of our allies in Southern Europe, for we are keenly aware the dangers close to your home.

In that regard, I commend France for taking targeted financial measures against those responsible for the attempted terrorist attack on Paris earlier this summer and the support from Belgium and Germany for the investigation into Iran's continued malign activity.

Regarding cyber, as the secretary general just noted, cyber attacks are more frequent, they're more complex and they're more destructive. And, of course, he just got late breaking word in that regard. But this is why the United States, like the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia, will provide national cyber contributions to help NATO fight in this important domain, consistent with NATO's defense mandate and as agreed by our leaders at the July summit.

This demonstrates an enduring American bipartisan commitment in Washington to keeping the fabric of our trans-Atlantic alliance strong and a clear recognition that NATO is central to American national security interests, a theme echoed across Europe and Canada.

As was abundantly clear from our detailed and extensive conversations here, NATO is also taking action, moving out on directives from our leaders summit, to include supporting our Georgian partners as they chart their own diplomatic, economic and security destiny; reforming NATO's command structure to keep this alliance fit for its time; initiating our Four 30s readiness program: 30 air squadrons, 30 ships and 30 battalions ready to be employed in under 30 days.

I note that later this month, every ally will participate in the Trident Juncture Exercise, our largest exercise since 2015. Allies will employ NATO standards to ensure military mobility across Europe's bridges and roads, waterways and airspace, and we are working closely with our E.U. partners to ensure their efforts to strengthen defense are complementary with NATO's, NATO being the bedrock of our collective defense, to quote French Minister of the Armed Forces Parly, and the only safeguard of our democracies' collective defensive security.

Regarding Iraq, as you heard from the secretary general, leaders agreed to establish a new training mission for Iraqi soldiers and police forces.

In Afghanistan, we continue our unflinching support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. NATO is committed to filling our combined joint statement of requirements by 100 percent.

The secretary general noted that our deterrence and defense includes conventional capabilities, cyber defense, missile defense, and the nuclear deterrent dimension. As our alliance moves at the speed of relevance on each, we send a clear message to our friends, "Do not be afraid," and to any adversary, "Do not be foolish."

We know democracies can be somewhat raucous for we are open societies. We value our people's voices and we would have it no other way.

We also know this is an unambiguous strength of our alliance. Democracies are much more powerful when they collectively set a course on security because they have the will of their peoples behind them.

Our leaders have set our course, deciding our nations' hopes and prosperities have the fullest opportunity when protected by a military alliance that shares fairly the responsibility of providing the greatest defense in the world. For peace and the rule of law are best maintained by strength and unity, and therein lies deterrence from conflict and stronger diplomatic persuasion.

That is what is happening as we speak, from the Black Sea to the Baltic, from the Balkans to the North Atlantic, as the secretary general has said, where American, Canadian and European soldiers, sailors and airmen are working together through NATO to keep our nations safe.

Now, you've heard about the -- the attack that the -- our Dutch colleagues have revealed, which was Russia's attempt to attack the very international organization that investigates chemical weapons use. And I would ask anyone here, is anyone surprised that they would attack that organization? I think not.

The GRU's cyber attack, which has been revealed, on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is the latest in a worldwide pattern of reckless and irresponsible behavior from Moscow. From its support to the Assad regime which used chemical weapons against its own people, to its use of a chemical agent on the sovereign soil of a NATO ally in the Salisbury attack, to this latest hacking attempt, Russia displays blatant disregard for human life and international law.

And despite denials from the Kremlin, the international community clearly sees the reality, and the United States stands shoulder to shoulder with our Dutch and British and all NATO allies and like-minded countries against this inhumane activity of chemical weapon use, and those we do support doing the investigations.

Now, may I take your questions?

STAFF: AFP, Damon Wake.

Q: Good afternoon. Thank you.

Can you tell us any more about the cyber capabilities that you're making available to NATO, and why they'll have a deterrent effect?

And secondly, if I may, is the thwarted attack on the OPCW -- do you -- do you feel that this merits some kind of offensive cyber response of its own?

Thank you.

SEC. MATTIS: You know, I don't talk about military operations, certainly not in a -- a situation -- a developing situation like this.

Basically, the Russians got caught with their -- with their -- with their equipment, with people who were doing it, and they have got to pay the piper. They're going to have to be held to account.

How we respond to something like this is a political decision by the nations involved, and we will be standing by them. But it does not necessarily equate to some kind of tit-for-tat on cyber. We have a wide variety among our nations of responses available to us.

STAFF: Reuters, Idrees Ali.

Q: Mr. Secretary, yesterday in Paris you talked about, sort of, talking to your NATO allies about Russian violation of the INF Treaty. Could you, sort of, talk to us about how your talks with your allies have gone in regard to that?

And in your speech, you mentioned that if Russia doesn't come in compliance, the United States would have to match its capabilities. What exactly does that mean?

SEC. MATTIS: Yeah, well, the discussions here on the INF violations are a continuation of discussions over many months. Basically, for over four years, through two American administrations and repeated diplomatic dialogues, there have been attempts to bring Russia back into compliance.

As the secretary general has stated, the only explanation for what Russia has been doing is that they are in violation of the treaty, and our discussions here were to ensure that we answered all questions that any of the nations had, and that we look at what options do we have, and to make certain that all the nations had input to me as I go into the discussions in Washington.

This will be a decision obviously made in concert with our allies by the president, and we'll -- we'll take it from there. But for right now, there was no disagreement about the fact that the Russians are in violation here among the nations.

Q: (Inaudible).

SEC. MATTIS: I prefer not to say how we'll respond. We have, again, a host of ways that we can respond. And I would take that as -- as a pre-ordained outcome. We will respond as we think is appropriate.

STAFF: NTV Norway, (inaudible).

SEC. MATTIS: One last point: But we are trying to bring them still back into compliance. And now is the time; it's gone on long enough.

STAFF: (inaudible)

Q: (inaudible), the Norwegian News Agency.

Mr. Secretary, for the Trident Juncture Exercise, what kind of message do you want to send to the Norwegian public about this exercise?

And also what will you do to make sure that nothing goes wrong and that you don't send the wrong signal to our Russian neighbors?

Thank you.

SEC. MATTIS: Yeah.

This, as Russia knows full well, is a defensive exercise. It is one that has tended to be in an area that they are very aware of. It's not hidden, we have been -- just the fact that you're asking about it, we've released the number of ships, the number of troops, this sort of thing. We are very, very transparent about it. It will not be on Russia's border in any way.

It would be a mischaracterization to put it in any kind of offensive or destabilizing sort of -- sort of context.

These are all the nations of the democracies together. They have been involved -- for example, the NATO military authorities have been involved in the planning of the exercise. It is calculated to be a show that we stand quietly together in unity in terms of maintaining peace and prosperity here in Europe. And we don't need any more misbehavior by anyone.

STAFF: Associated Press, Lolita Baldor.

Q: Lolita Baldor with AP.

Mr. Secretary, just to follow up on your comments on cyber, considering what the allies said today, does the U.S. also concur with their information about these attacks?

And can you say how soon the U.S. would be willing to provide such cyber capabilities to NATO allies?

And I guess, again, doesn't this latest information about the cyber attacks by Russia -- does this meet the threshold of something that would require some sort of response?

SEC. MATTIS: Yeah.

We are ready today to provide cyber support to our allies that is now. And I think that I will just tell you that I've seen enough of the evidence to say the Dutch and the British are 100 percent accurate in who they have attributed this to.

STAFF: Thank you very much, sir.

SEC. MATTIS: That it?

STAFF: That's it.

SEC. MATTIS: Okay, there's my boss.

STAFF: Thanks, everybody.

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