

**PRESS CONFERENCE BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS STOLTENBERG  
FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE NATO-GEORGIA COMMISSION (NGC) IN  
DEFENCE MINISTERS' SESSION**

*03 October 2018*

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Good evening.

We have just finished a productive meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission.

Georgia is among our closest partners.

And we deeply appreciate its many contributions to our shared security.

Georgia is one of the largest contributors to our training mission in Afghanistan.

Helping to stabilize the country, and deny safe haven to terrorists.

Georgia also provides troops to the NATO Response Force.

This afternoon, we discussed how we can build on our cooperation.

At our Summit in July, Allied leaders reaffirmed that Georgia will join the Alliance.

This is in line with our decision at the Bucharest Summit in 2008.

NATO's door remains open.

Today, Allies also restated their full support for Georgia's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

We call on Russia to end its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

And to withdraw its forces from these regions of Georgia.

We are also concerned by Russia's military build-up in the Black Sea region.

Black Sea security is a priority for NATO and for Georgia.

We are working together here more closely than ever before:

With training for Georgian Coast Guard boarding teams;

More cooperation between Georgian and NATO naval forces;

And with cooperation between Georgia's Joint Maritime Operations Centre and the NATO's Maritime Command.

Allies also welcomed the continued progress Georgia is making on reforms.

In particular on more effective security and defence institutions and modernising their armed forces.

The Substantial NATO-Georgia Package is already bolstering the country's defence reforms.

Including with our Joint Training and Evaluation Centre.

We encourage Georgia to continue along the path of reform.

Tonight, Ministers will discuss our work to achieve fairer burden sharing in the Alliance.

Over the past two years, European Allies and Canada have increased their defence spending by \$41 billion US dollars.

And I expect to see further increases next year.

So we are investing more in our security. But there is a renewed sense of urgency that we must do more.

And this is what we will discuss during our dinner tonight.

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

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** And we're starting with the lady here, Georgian Public Broadcaster.

**Question [Georgian Public Broadcaster]:** Georgian Public Broadcaster. Mr Secretary General, you are talking now about implementation process of substantive package. After we will finish this process, I mean the substantive package between Georgia and NATO, what else can we do before our membership, before our invitation to this organisation? As we know, Georgian Minister had today some new ideas. What do you think? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** So, we will do more together with Georgia next year and we will continue to implement the substantial package and we will do more together in different areas, like for instance in the maritime domain, where we have started to work together, training the coastguard, having closer cooperation between our naval forces, but also between the NATO Maritime Command and the Georgian Maritime Operation Centre. We will also have the big exercise next year, which is a strong sign of the close cooperation - how we work together, and we are also of course very much

appreciating the fact that Georgian forces are participating in NATO exercises, missions. I mentioned already Afghanistan, but also the fact that Georgia are contributing forces to the NATO Response Force. So, in many different areas, we are doing more together in different missions and operations and training. But then we will of course provide support with reforms, with modernising the armed forces of Georgia, and the Defence Minister put forward some additional ideas. We will of course look into them, because this is an ongoing process, where we do more together, and I think what the NATO-Georgia Commission meeting today showed, that this is something that is of benefit, both for NATO and for Georgia. This is about protecting each other. This is about supporting each other. This is about helping each other and this is about learning from each other and it's about facing common security challenges together. So, we really appreciate the close partnership and that was strongly expressed by all Allies at the meeting today.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** Gentleman in the front row here.

**Question:** Mr Secretary General, I want to touch upon the issue on which today Georgia's Prime Minister, Mamuka Bakhtadze, made a special statement. The situation concerns a 29 year old Georgian citizen, a woman, a mother of three children which... who was detained in the Gori Municipality by the occupation forces. You know, we have had recently another case when Georgian citizen, Archil Tatumashvili, was also kidnapped by the occupation war forces and then killed. As we see, Russian occupation still goes on and in this case Georgian citizens are kidnapped on their own territory, on the territory of their country. It has been reported that this Georgian citizen, this woman of three children, has been sentenced to a two months pre-trial detention, and I think it's very important to call on Russia to stop such activities by the occupation forces. We know whatever happens on the occupied territories, Russia bears responsibility for always. We now speak about the life of human beings, about the Georgian citizens who can't live safely along the occupation border, and this situation it still goes on and it's repeated and repeated and other Georgian citizens which, not detained by the occupation forces, but is kidnapped.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** It's hard for me to comment on specific cases I don't know, but what I can say in general is that we recognise and support the territorial integrity of Georgia within its international recognised borders, meaning that we call on Russia to reverse its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as kind of independent states, because these regions are part of Georgia and within its international recognised borders. And we call on Russia to withdraw its forces from both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And I think that there are many reasons to call on Russia to do that, that's the only way to respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Georgia, but of course also that's a way to address other incidents and examples we have related to the challenges and problems this military presence creates for people living in Georgia.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** The gentleman in the second row. Politiken.

**Question [Politiken]:** I would like to hear, burden-sharing is a core issue also on this meeting. It is a matter of fact that Denmark will not be able to fulfil the Wales declaration in 2024, and I guess quite a number of other countries will not either. What will happen? What is the reaction from the Alliance when these countries, for instance Denmark, will not fulfil the Wales declaration?

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** Let me start by saying that we are actually making a lot of progress. After years of reducing, cutting defence budgets across the whole Alliance, we now have seen four consecutive years with increase, across Europe and Canada. And for the first time in many years, we see real increase in all Allies - from all NATO member states. So, that's a significant change, it's a totally different picture than we saw just a few years ago. All Allies have stopped the cuts, all Allies have started to increase, and more and more Allies meet the 2% guideline. When we made the pledge back in 2014, only three Allies spent 2% of GDP on defence. This year, we expect eight Allies to be at 2% or very close to 2%, it depends a bit on GDP estimates. And the majority of Allies have put forward plans on how to reach 2% within 2024. I expect all Allies to make good on the commitment, the promises we all made together in 2014 in Wales, and which we reiterated as late as July this year. So, we had a good story to tell, after years of going in the wrong direction, we have started to invest more, and that's something that applies for all NATO Allies, including Denmark. But we still have a long way to go and we will continue to push those Allies who have not put forward credible plans, to do so. And I'm not underestimating the challenges, but I'm saying that, compared to where we were just four years ago, we have made really significant progress. Let me also add that burden-sharing is about more than cash. It's about contributions to NATO missions and operations and about capabilities, and I will like to commend Denmark for being a country which has really contributed to many different NATO missions and operations, especially in Afghanistan, where Denmark also has paid a high price, a high number of casualties. And then Denmark is investing in modern capabilities. I know that they're now investing in, for instance, F-35s. So we welcome all of this. At the same time, contributions cannot substitute for investments. We need more spending and we need better spending, so we will continue to focus both on cash, capabilities and contributions, and I expect all Allies to deliver on that.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** Lady in the front row.

**Question:** You have talked about cyber threats and about setting up a cyber operation centre and in the next year, in Ukraine, presidential and parliamentary election will be held, and it is possible cooperation between NATO and Ukraine, to tackle these threats during the election? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** NATO has already been helping Ukraine with strengthening its cyber defences, its cyber capabilities. We are doing that through our trust funds. We have a trust fund for cyber defence, and by providing funding and support in strengthening the cyber defences, the cyber capabilities of Ukraine. We also help them with defending their own networks and their own infrastructure. For instance, NATO is

now helping Ukraine with setting up a cyber incident response centre, which will be one way to help them to deal with incidents or attempts to interfere or to meddle or to hack into their cyber networks. So, we are already providing that kind of help and I promised President Poroshenko, when he was here at the NATO Summit, that NATO Allies will continue to provide support, including to the trust funds, and one of them are actually funding activities related to cyber.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** Al Arabiya, gentleman over there.

**Question [Al Arabiya]:** Mr Secretary General, in Iraq there... Iraq has now a President and Prime Minister, I'm talking about Iraq. I would like to know the level of preparation of the NATO mission, when it will start in Iraq, a country which Iran is being involved in its instability, you mentioned that very clearly yesterday, as well as France accused officially Iran to be behind the terrorist plot this summer in France. Germany accept to extradite one Iranian diplomat. So, my question about Iran, how concerned NATO is with this Iranian intelligence activities in Europe, and do you think that NATO members should take a collective step to push back the Iran intelligence activities in Europe? Thank you.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** First on the training mission in Iraq; well, we launched a mission at our Summit in July and now we are gradually increasing our presence. And we are also very grateful to Canada, which has taken on the responsibility to lead the training mission in Iraq. It will be a Canadian commander that will be in charge of the training mission, and we are gradually now building up this training mission and have already started to do so. We have to remember that NATO is already in Iraq. We have been there for some time already. But what we decided at the Summit was to launch a new training mission, to scale up our presence and our activities in Iraq, because we strongly believe that the best way to prevent Daesh to come back in any form, is to strengthen the Iraqi force's capabilities, or their capability to be able to fight terrorism themselves. So, therefore training Iraqi forces is one of the best weapons we have in the fight against terrorism. When it comes to Iran, all Allies are concerned about the destabilising activities of Iran in the region, in different neighbouring countries. We are, of course, also concerned about the fact that Iran continues to provide support to different armed groups in different countries. So this is something we follow and NATO Allies are, of course, also working together: for instance, when it comes to intelligence, and other ways to address some of the challenges which are related to destabilising activities and support for terrorist organisations.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** We've got one question over there.

**Question [Deutsche Welle]:** Thank you. Juri Rescheto, Deutsche Welle. Secretary General, you talked today about Black Sea and Azov Sea is a part of a region, yeah, unfortunately there wasn't NATO-Ukraine Commission today, but today ministerial is the first one since the escalation taking place in the Azov Sea, you know, that Russia is conducting excessive controls of ships coming to Ukrainian ports, for example European

ships, and also Russia started several months ago military build up in the sea, and Ukraine now is building naval base here. What NATO is planning to do about it, you know, to alleviate the new security challenge? Thank you very much.

**Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]:** We follow the situation in the Azov Sea very closely and we are concerned because what we see is that Russia is impeding normal civilian traffic, commercial vessels, and, of course, that's a problem for Ukraine, which has seen that normal traffic from some of its harbours - in Mariupol and other places - has been impeded or there have been problems with the normal traffic in and out. And I think just is one example of a pattern we have seen, that Russia illegally annexed Crimea, then continued to destabilise especially Donbass, but also through the activities in the Azov Sea they continue to try to destabilise Ukraine. So, what NATO does is that we provide support with political support, with practical support, partly within the different NATO programmes, trust funds and so on, but of course NATO Allies also provide support bilaterally to Ukraine, and again this is about partly political, helping to modernise the Ukrainian armed forces, the security institutions, different trust funds, but also about equipment and other kinds of direct support. This was something we discussed when we met President Poroshenko here in July. It was also something I discussed briefly with him when I met him in New York recently, and NATO will continue to provide support to Ukraine, but of course we also strongly support the efforts to find a political solution to fully implement the Minsk Agreement, which is the only viable way to a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the problems we see in and around Ukraine, including the Azov Sea.

**Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]:** Thank you very much. This is all we have time for now and we will see you tomorrow. Thank you.

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

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