

**PRESS CONFERENCE BY NATO SECRETARY GENERAL JENS
STOLTENBERG FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE NORTH
ATLANTIC COUNCIL IN FOREIGN MINISTERS' SESSION**

04 December 2018

Good evening.

NATO's Foreign Ministers have just met and discussed transatlantic security, European efforts on defence, burden sharing and also the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. And I will focus on the INF Treaty.

All Allies have concluded that Russia has developed and fielded a new ground launched cruise missile system. The SSC-8, also known as the 9M729. Allies agree that this missile system violates the INF Treaty and poses significant risks to Euro-Atlantic security. And they agree that Russia is therefore in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty.

The Treaty has been a pillar of Euro-Atlantic security for more than thirty years.

It eliminated an entire category of weapons.

And made us all safer.

For over five years the United States has made every effort to engage with Russia. And to seek answers about the new missile.

The US has raised the matter formally with Russia at senior levels more than 30 times. Other Allies have raised it with Russia too. We did so, a few weeks ago, in the NATO-Russia Council here in Brussels.

But Russia has continued to produce and deploy the missiles. Russia's violation of the INF Treaty erodes the foundations of effective arms control and undermines Allied security.

This is part of Russia's broader pattern of behaviour –intended to weaken the overall Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

There is no question that the United States fully complies with the Treaty. There are no new US missiles in Europe. But there are new Russian missiles in Europe.

Arms control agreements are only effective if they are respected by all sides. A situation where the US abides by the treaty and Russia does not, is simply not sustainable.

We call on Russia to return urgently to full and verifiable compliance with the INF Treaty. It is now up to Russia to preserve the INF Treaty.

NATO Allies remain firmly committed to preserving strategic stability and Euro-Atlantic unity. NATO will continue to ensure the credibility and the effectiveness of the Alliance's overall deterrence and defence posture. We will continue to consult regularly. And we will continue to keep Russia's military posture and deployments under close review.

At the same time, all Allies are firmly committed to supporting and strengthening real and verifiable arms control.

NATO exists to prevent conflict and preserve peace. And we seek dialogue, not confrontation, with Russia.

We don't want a new arms race. We don't want a new Cold War. So Allies will continue to work for a better relationship with Russia.

We will continue to engage, including through the meetings of the NATO-Russia Council.

So Russia now has a last chance to come back into compliance with the INF Treaty but we must also start to prepare for a world without the Treaty.

And then I'm ready to take your questions.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, Wall Street Journal.

Question [Wall Street Journal]: Dan Michaels, Wall Street Journal. In the discussions today, was there any dissent? Was there anyone saying that the US was moving too quickly to announce it was leaving officially the INF? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: All Allies agreed, and we have reflected that agreement in the statement. And the statement is very clear, very strong, and it states clearly that Russia is in violation and Russia is in material breach of its obligations under the INF Treaty. We also say that it's up to Russia now to preserve the INF Treaty. They have a last chance to show and demonstrate, in a verifiable way, that they comply with the Treaty. But we also have to prepare for a world without the Treaty. And that's exactly what we now do: we state that Russia is violating the Treaty, we call on them to come back into full compliance with the Treaty, but we also start to prepare for the fact that this Treaty may break down because Russia, after years of engagement from our side with them, they still don't provide any credible answers to all our questions.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, NPR.

Question [NPR/Deutsche Welle]: Hi, Terri Schultz with NPR and Deutsche Welle. NATO has known for quite a while that this was the US intention, so when you say now that you will start to prepare for a world without this arms control treaty, what does that mean? What are some of the ideas that you are looking at? And also, when you were asked about dissent, we know that not all countries would choose this as the step for the US to take today, so I mean simply repeating that they all agreed on this statement doesn't mean that there aren't Allies who believe differently.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I think the way we have handled this issue demonstrates the strength of NATO. We are 29 Allies; there are some times discussions, there

are some times the need to sit down and meet and discuss, but at the end we're able to agree. And this statement is a strong demonstration of the unity and the strength of the Alliance, because it sends a very clear message about who is responsible for the violations and the fact that the INF Treaty is now really in jeopardy, and it also sends a message to Russia about that they have a last chance to come back into compliance. So, I really believe that this shows how important it is that we have done exactly what we have done; that we have consulted, that there has been briefings, that we have shared intelligence, and then that we have been able to agree on a common position on the way forward.

And this is very important and this is really serious, because of course all missiles are dangerous. But these missiles are in particular dangerous because they are hard to detect, they are mobile, they are nuclear capable, they will reduce warning time, they can reach European cities, and therefore they also reduce the threshold for a potential use of nuclear weapons in a conflict. That's the reason why the INF Treaty has been so important and that's the reason why it is so serious that this Treaty now risks breaking totally down, because of the Russian violations. The last thing I'm going to say is that we are constantly assessing the military posture of Russia, we have strengthened our collective defence and we will then of course also assess the consequences of the deployment of the new Russian missiles.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, Financial Times, over there.

Question [Financial Times]: Thank you. Michael Peel, Financial Times. Was there much discussion of potential next steps if Russia doesn't come into compliance? And are there concerns, particularly among European Allies, of the prospect now of fresh US missile deployments in Europe possibly, contributing to exactly the kind of arms race you want to avoid?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: The important message from this meeting is that we will continue to discuss and address this issue within the NATO framework. We will collectively develop a set of responses. We will do that in a measured, considered way, because this is very serious and we need to analyse the consequences of each and every step. That's exactly why we need to do this as an Alliance, all 29 Allies together. The INF Treaty; the US is party to the INF Treaty, other NATO Allies are not. But of course, the consequences of a breakdown of the INF Treaty will be there for all Allies; this affects the security of all Allies. And therefore, I welcome the fact that United States has consulted over months and long time with NATO Allies. This was an important issue at the previous Defence Ministerial meeting in October, it was an issue addressed at the Summit in July, and it has been an issue which has been discussed within NATO for some time. So, it's too early to conclude now, but the important message is that we will do this as an Alliance, we will have a collectively developed response.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Washington Post. Up there.

Question [Washington Post]: Thank you. Michael Birnbaum from the Washington Post. Mr Secretary General, you've spoken repeatedly over the years about how the missile deployments of the 1970s and 1980s shaped your perspective as a person and as a politician. I wanted to ask what you feel it means for your legacy, as a NATO Secretary General, to preside over an era that likely does see the end of the INF Treaty? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I regret that we now most likely will see the end of the INF Treaty. But at the same time, we don't have any other alternative than to react in the way we do. Because we have to remember that the... no arms control agreement will work if it's only respected by one part. One party. And the problem with the INF Treaty is that the United States is in compliance, while Russia is violating the Treaty. And that's not only a problem for the INF Treaty, but that's a problem for all other arms control treaties, because if we accept violation of one treaty then we also undermine the credibility of all the other arms control treaties.

So, this is part about trying to defend the INF Treaty, but also about trying to defend the whole idea of verifiable arms control. You are right; for me, the issue of intermediate-range nuclear weapons shaped my understanding, back in the 70s and the 80s, about security and defence issues. And I think it shaped a whole generation of young politicians, especially in Europe. We were very concerned about the deployment of SS20s, intermediate-range Soviet Union missiles, but also were concerned about the NATO response, the Pershing and Cruise missiles. Therefore, we all really welcomed and we really felt that the world was moving forward when the Soviet Union and the United States, in 1987, agreed on the INF Treaty.

And this was the first treaty that didn't only put a ceiling on the number of weapons, or reduce the number of weapons, but actually banned all weapons, abolished a whole category of weapons. So therefore, this was really arms control at its best. And, therefore, it is a really a big setback if this Treaty now breaks totally down. And, therefore, we call on Russia to use this last chance to come into compliance, but again we have done that for some time, so we need also to recognise that we have to be prepared for a world without the Treaty, and that's something which we all regret very much.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Reuters, first row.

Question [Reuters]: Thank you, Oana. Robin Emmott from Reuters. Secretary General, do you have any idea what the diplomacy during the next 60 days could entail for you? Do you imagine approaching Russia through the NATO-Russia Council? Can you imagine some kind of agreement where, obviously in 60 days, Russia isn't going to destroy these missiles, but it could come forwards with some kind of diplomatic message? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: We will reach out to Russia in many different ways. Just the fact that we now have this united NATO position sends a clear message to Russia. Second, NATO Allies meet with Russia bilaterally, in different formats, with the Heads of State, Government, Foreign Ministers, and so on, and they raise this issue with their Russian counterparts. And they will also do so in the following days and weeks. And we are also ready to raise this issue again in the NATO-Russia Council; we did so just a few weeks ago.

So, Russia knows our position, they know our concern, and in the beginning they denied the existence of this system. Then actually they were not able to deny the existence of the system, but then suddenly they changed explanation and said, "Yes, the system exists, but it doesn't violate the INF Treaty". But we are ready of course to talk to Russia; we did that in the NATO-Russia Council, we are ready to do it again. But I think this is actually not so much a question of how many meetings we will have with Russia, because they very well know our position; this is about whether Russia wants to preserve the INF Treaty. If they so want, they can comply with the Treaty; if not, then this Treaty will not survive.

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

Question [Macedonian Press Agency]: Tanja Milevska, Macedonian Press Agency. Secretary General, the Greek Alternate Minister for Foreign Affairs said that he raised the issue of the Macedonian Prime Minister's statement, saying that it's not in the spirit of the Prespa Agreement. Can you confirm that Mr Katrougalos raised this issue with you? And if yes, is this a problem for Macedonia's prospects and membership in NATO? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I had a very good discussion and meeting with the Greek Alternate Foreign Minister, and tomorrow we will also have a meeting where we will address the Western Balkans, including the name agreement between Athens and Skopje. We strongly welcome the progress we have seen, we welcome the name agreement and we really hope that the name agreement will be fully implemented. And, therefore, as soon as that happens, we are also then ready to sign the accession protocol and welcome the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ as our 30th member. I think I will refrain from going into the details, but the main message is that all NATO Allies agree that we are ready to welcome FYROM, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, as our new member, under its new name, the Republic of Northern Macedonia, as soon as the name agreement is implemented. And I really hope that will happen soon.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we have time for one last question. VG.

Question [VG]: Hi, Alf Johnsen, VG Norwegian newspaper. If so that the INF Treaty is gone in like eight months from now, what kind of countermeasures will NATO Allies take then? Will there be a possible development of a similar kind of weapons from the NATO side to kind of countermeasure the Russian missiles? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I think it will be wrong if I started to speculate about all the different potential ways NATO could respond. What is important today is two things: first, that we will make our decisions in a considered and measured way, and we will do it collectively as an alliance; second, is that we will take the necessary decisions to maintain credible deterrence and defence. Because there can be no doubt that NATO has to be able, also in the future, to defend and protect all Allies, and provide credible deterrence. That's the best way to preserve the peace. As long as our deterrence is credible and as long as we make the necessary decisions to ensure that, then we prevent conflict. And NATO exists to preserve the peace and to prevent conflict, and therefore we take the necessary decisions to make sure that's also the case in the future. But this is so serious that I think if I started to, you know, list potential options, it will only add to uncertainty and increase tensions, so we will do this in a measured and responsible way.

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

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you.

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