North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Joint press point

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Prime Minister Dacian Ciolos of Romania
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(As delivered)

So Prime Minister Ciolos, you are really warmly welcome here at NATO headquarters because it is great to have you here and to be able to meet with you and to discuss common challenges.

And Romania is a highly valued member of our Alliance. Contributing actively to NATO's missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo. To Black Sea security. And to our support for Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Helping them to build their own defence capacities.

Romania is also hosting important NATO assets. Like the Multinational Division South East, which was activated in December. It will strengthen the defence of our Alliance.

Last year I visited the NATO Force Integration Unit in Bucharest, one of the eight small new headquarters we are setting up in the Eastern part of our Alliance. It will contribute to planning, exercises, and help ensure NATO troops can deploy to Romania quickly, if needed.

Romania will also host a vital part of the NATO missile-defence system in Deveselu.

I commend Romania for increasing your spending on defence in 2015. And for your commitment to continue this increase in the years ahead. This is key for our Alliance as we respond to security challenges in a changed world. Where we all face a new and demanding security environment.

Romania does a lot to contribute to a strong NATO. And a strong NATO is the best guarantee for security in Europe.

Especially today, when we face the biggest security challenges in a generation. Our Alliance is responding to these challenges. We are increasing the readiness of our forces. We have stepped up our presence in the Eastern part of the Alliance. And NATO's presence will get stronger as we prepare for our Summit in Warsaw in July.

We are also working closer than ever with the European Union.

In supporting the response to the migration and refugee crisis. On dealing with hybrid threats. And in supporting partners like Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.

A strong NATO is also the best foundation for dialogue with a more assertive Russia. We do not seek confrontation. On the contrary, we are working to restore predictability in our relations with Russia. And transparency related to military activities.

There is no contradiction between strong defence and dialogue with Russia. We need both. More defence – and more dialogue.

This is even more important when times are as difficult as they are now.

So, NATO is adapting to wide-ranging and complex challenges.

In this, we count on Romania. And Romania can count on NATO.

So welcome again, mister Prime Minister. I look forward to working with you in the busy months ahead of our Warsaw Summit.

So welcome once again.

OANA LUNGESCU (NATO SPOKESPERSON): We'll go to Radio Romania, over there, lady in green.

Q: I have two questions. Secretary General first, you were mentioning yesterday after the meeting with Mr. Prime Minister of Turkey that NATO is going, has started already to be present in Aegean both in the maritime waters of Turkey and Greece. How challenging is this for the south, Romania being part of the south, and how challenging is this taking into account that Syria conflict, ceasefire, we see no progress yet and you are mentioning Russia here as an assertive challenge for the alliance. [Speaking foreign language with translation]. Mr. Prime Minister, you have talked about the defence budget, Romania has committed to apply, to put in practice this commitments. Can you develop? And Moldova remains a priority for us and I wanted to know if Mr. Secretary General assured you of a very active collaboration in this regard? Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): First about the Aegean Sea. NATO decided at our defence ministerial meeting the 11th of February to assist, to help the European Union, Greece, Turkey to cope with the migrant and the refugee crisis. This is the biggest migrant and refugee crisis in Europe since the end of the Second World War and of course when allies are asking for our support and when the European Union asks for our support then we do our utmost to respond in a positive way. And therefore we decided to deploy the NATO Maritime Standing Naval Group to the Aegean Sea and we deployed the first ships just 24 hours after we made the decision the 11th of February. But during the weekend, so during this weekend, we decided to expand and to step up our support and we decided to do that in three ways. Partly by expanding the area of our presence of our activity.

So we are now moving into the territorial waters of Turkey and Greece and we have started to do that by yesterday, we started to do that already yesterday. The second thing is that we

have established much closer cooperation with the European Union border agency Frontex and the third element is that we are increasing the number of ships, of NATO ships which are deployed in the Aegean Sea. And I welcome announcements from UK and France that they will deploy additional ships. All of this is something we do to support. NATO is not going to turn back the boats with migrants and refugees but we are going to do surveillance, reconnaissance and monitor the situation and then share real time information with the Turkish Coast Guard, with the Greek Coast Guard, with Frontex enabling them to handle and to cope with the situation in the Agean Sea.

This is only one element of a more comprehensive and broad response and the Prime Minister updated me about the discussions in the European Union which are related to how the European Union can work with Turkey when it comes to the return of migrants and refugees and then have a more legal and better organized way of accepting refugees coming to Europe. So we are playing our part, we are supporting the efforts and NATO plays one important role in the more comprehensive international response to the international migrant and refugee crisis.

But of course the main issue is to stop the war in Syria and it is important to support the agreement and the full implementation of the cessation of hostility which was agreed between Russia, United States and some of the other stakeholders in the region. We have seen violations of the ceasefire but I think it’s extremely important to continue to support the full implementation because cessation of hostilities, the ceasefire, is the only possible platform for renewed efforts to have a peaceful negotiated solution to the crisis in Syria and NATO is strongly supporting those efforts because we need a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria.

DACIAN CIOLOS (Prime Minister, Romania): [Speaking with translator]. With regard to the defence budget, as you know Romania has taken this commitment, it’s a political commitment from the political parties and from the President of Romania and our government has committed to continue this effort in order to reach 2 % of the GDP we hope starting from the next year and to maintain this level for the next 10 years. This, these funds will be used, will be allowed in order to enhance the quality of life for the military professionals and to equip the army because Romania wants to have an enhanced military presence on the eastern flank, Romania wants to be a proactive NATO member. We want to receive defence and protection and we want to be able to offer this protection and defence capability and this is the way we want to see our membership in NATO.

As you have seen we have 1.7 % from the GDP allowed to military expenses compared to 1.5 % for the last year. In regard with the cooperation with Moldova, in our quality of NATO member state we have been assured by Mr. Secretary General that NATO wants to cooperate with the countries from the eastern region that want and demand for these cooperation and this is the case for Moldova. We want to enhance this cooperation not, this is not an act against Russia but Romania as a European Union member state and a former partner of Russia wants to cooperate with this neighbour but at the same time we want to be

assured of our security. As you know for the last years our security has been very shaky, so the commitment Romania has in as a NATO country have this approach of defence and not, are defensive and not offensive and this is the spirit, this is the state of mind in our cooperation with Moldova.

Q: [Speaking foreign language with translator]. Sedra Voiku from DG24 (sp?). You have talked about concrete measures in the Aegean Sea. What's the strategy, what are the measures in order to enhance security in the Black Sea?

JENS STOLTENBERG: The Black Sea [inaudible – no microphone]. But the whole of the NATO alliance and we have seen a significant Russian military build-up in the Black Sea region, especially after the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea. We have seen that NATO, no that Russia excuse me, is deploying advanced weapons systems and that they are developing what the experts are calling anti-access air denial capabilities and this is part of a pattern where Russia is investing heavily in different kinds of modern defence equipment and when, and where they are deploying them close to NATO borders. Both in the Bering Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and now also in the eastern Mediterranean with the increased Russian presence in Syria. And therefore NATO is responding and the way we are responding is partly by increasing our forward presence, increasing our military presence in the eastern part of the alliance including in Romania.

And I mentioned this, both the new small NATO headquarters, the NATO Force Integration Units, but also the importance of, of increased military presence in other ways and we are also looking into how we can increase the responsiveness, the readiness of our forces so they are able to deploy very quickly if needed. And one of the issues we are discussing now as part of our preparations for the NATO summit in Warsaw in July is how we can do more, both when it comes to forward presence of multinational forces, making sure that we send a very clear signal that an attack on one ally will be an attack on the whole alliance and also how we can further increase the readiness of our forces so they can deploy very quickly if needed. So the Black Sea is part of a, of a changed security environment and NATO has already responded and we will continue to adapt so we make sure that NATO also in the future is able to respond to a more challenging security environment.

OANA LUNGESCU: Thank you very much. This concludes this press point. Thank you.

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