Secretary General media huddle following 9/11 ceremony

2019-09-12

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: All NATO Allies support efforts to try to find a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict in Afghanistan and that has been strongly impressed by all NATO Allies for a long time. We have to understand that our military presence in Afghanistan is there to create the conditions for a peaceful, negotiated solution and we have to send a very clear message to Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield. They have to sit down at the negotiating table and then find a peaceful solution. So I think that the fact that there is soon to be a new National Security Advisor in the United States will not change that fundamental approach: that we continue to provide military support to Afghanistan to create the conditions for a peaceful negotiated solution.

OANA LUNGESCU [NATO spokesperson]: NTV.

QUESTION [NTV, Turkey]: Two short questions, Secretary General, NTV Turkey. The first is with regard Turkey's contribution in Afghanistan and particularly in the fight against terrorism. Sometimes we have friction between Washington and Ankara, but there is a tremendous contribution – your view on that? And the second thing is: with regard to common decision to have common patrolling in Idlib between United States and, and Turkey?

JENS STOLTENBERG: So, Turkey has been, and still is, a very important Ally in the fight against terrorism. Because Turkey has been one of the lead nations in Afghanistan for many, many years. I spoke today, actually, with the Foreign Minister, Çavuşoğlu, and we discussed the way forward in Afghanistan, and Turkey is important because they are responsible for the airport and they are one of the lead nations in Afghanistan. And he also expressed that Turkey remains committed to our NATO train, assist and advise mission in Afghanistan. Turkey has also been key in the fight against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. Turkey is bordering Iraq and Syria and without contributions, without infrastructure in Turkey, it would have been much more difficult, much harder to make the gains we have made in the fight against Daesh. NATO's not on the ground in northern Syria. But I welcome the fact that two NATO Allies, the United States and Turkey, now are coordinating their activities and are finding ways to work together in northern Syria.

OANA LUNGESCU: Deutsche Welle/NPR.

TERI SCHULZ: Teri Schultz, and also to Madam Ambassador. The Taliban had apparently been convinced that they would . . . needed to negotiate about peace and then that fell apart. Are you disappointed to see that there is no longer going to be the signing of an agreement

between the Taliban and the United States? That was what you wanted. That was what you've been calling for. And Madam Ambassador, do you think that a quick drawdown of US forces from Afghanistan is now more or less likely with the departure of John Bolton and with the . . . with the dissolution of the peace talks. Thank you?

JENS STOLTENBERG: All NATO Allies want a peaceful negotiated solution. But, of course, it has to be a solution which fulfils some minimum requirements. And we have stated clearly that we are working for a peace deal, not a leave deal. So, it has to fulfil some basic conditions and it has to be a credible deal, meaning that we have to believe that the deal actually delivers peace, stability and that we can preserve the main achievements we have made in Afghanistan, making sure that Afghanistan doesn't once again become a safe haven for international terrorists. And that we also do whatever we can to preserve the rights of women, human rights in Afghanistan, where we've seen a lot of progress over the last years, not least supported by the presence of NATO troops. It's too early to say when talks can again start, but, again, the aim is to have a peaceful solution. So, at the end of the day, there has to be talks again to find a negotiated solution. But we stay committed to our military presence in Afghanistan, to make that possible, to create the conditions for peace.

AMBASSADOR HE MRS KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON [US Permanent Representative to NATO]: Yes, I certainly appreciate what the Secretary General has said regarding the commitment of NATO. And we always knew this would be hard. We never thought that getting this far would be an easy task. And I think that, at this point, our security leaders – and we're certainly talking to the Secretary General – to be able to start again with the best plan that can go forward and what is in our best interests for the United States, the best interests of NATO, the best interests of the Afghan people, for a country that we hope will be able to reconcile and become a a country that can stand on its own. That's all of our goal.

OANA LUNGESCU: Euronews?

QUESTION [Euronews]: Secretary General, what's your response to testing of missiles that were banned by INF Treaty by United States and Russia?

JENS STOLTENBERG: Well, the demise of the INF Treaty is something which is a great concern for all NATO Allies. But the reason why we have seen the breakdown of the INF Treaty is that Russia, for years, have deployed missiles, which is in violation of the treaty, intermediate-range nuclear-capable missiles in Europe. And we have called on Russia again and again over several years to come back into compliance, to respect the INF Treaty and Russia decided not to do so. So, therefore, all NATO Allies supported and agreed with the United States when they deemed and stated that Russia was in violation. And all NATO Allies also agreed with the United States when the United States stated that they had to withdraw from the INF Treaty, simply because the treaty didn't work. A treaty which is only respected by one side doesn't work, doesn't provide security. So there is no doubt that the reason why the treaty has broken down is the Russian violation.

Then, of course, what we are doing in NATO now is that we are adapting to a world without the INF Treaty, with more Russian missiles. We will do that in a coordinated, in a defensive way. But we have to make sure that we maintain credible deterrence and defence, also in a world where the INF Treaty doesn’t exist anymore and where Russia has deployed new, nuclear-capable missiles in Europe.

OANA LUNGESCU: NRK.

[Following question and answer in Norwegian]

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2019/09/12/secretary-general-media-huddle-following-911-ceremony