North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Press point

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the occasion of his visit to Jordan
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(As delivered)

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: … and also with the Foreign Minister and with the Joint Chief of Staff. And I visited the King Abdullah Training Centre, Special Operation Forces Training Centre. And my message in Jordan has been that NATO strongly values the close partnership with Jordan, the political dialogue but also the practical cooperation. And I commend and salute Jordan for the bravery and the key role Jordan has played in the fight against Daesh. This is a common enemy, and Jordan has made an extremely important contributions to our joint efforts to defeat Daesh. Now we have to focus on that we make sure that Daesh is not able to come back and re-emerge as a military threat, and we have to understand that we need to continue the political fight, the ideological fight, against this kind of extremist violent ideology.

NATO appreciates very much the contributions of Jordan to NATO missions and operations in the fight against extremism, terrorism, but also, for instance, in our efforts in Afghanistan. And Jordan has also been together with us in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Balkans and in many other places. Jordan is also contributing to the NATO Response Force. We exercise together. Jordan hosted one of our regional exercises in this region. And we work with Jordan on many different areas, like cyber defence, like countering improvised explosive devices, exercises, and also border security. So we will continue to work with Jordan. And that is what I discussed with His Majesty, with the Joint Chief of Staff, is how we can continue to work closer together fighting terrorism, building a defence capacity and reforming and modernising the armed forces of Jordan. So we thank Jordan and look forward to continue to work with them.

Then just a couple of words about my visit to Iraq. I arrived from Baghdad yesterday. And as we now move from a combat role of the Global Coalition to fight Daesh in Iraq, we move towards more and more training. And again I commend the Iraqi Government for their courage. I salute them for their professionalism in the fight against Daesh, and the victory and the progress they have achieved. NATO Allies have supported them all the way through the Global Coalition and also through NATO providing support to the fight against Daesh with our AWACS surveillance planes and training of Iraqi forces, which actually took place here in Jordan at the King Abdullah Training Centre. Now more of the training takes place inside Iraq. And we will scale up training in Iraq. We do training, for instance, in countering IEDs,

demining, and military medicine, maintenance of equipment; but we are also now planning to establish military schools: for instance, military schools, academies, to help the Iraqis being able to increase their capacity to train their own forces. We will only be in Iraq as long as we are invited by the Iraqi Government. We are now looking into how to expand the training, because Prime Minister al-Abadi requested more NATO presence, and we are now discussing how we can increase the NATO presence to increase support for them, making sure that we are never forced back in the situation where we have to help them with combat operations. We strongly believe that prevention is better than intervention, and therefore to train local forces to build up capacity is the best way to prevent NATO being forced back in a combat role in this region.

I think that's what I can say as an introduction. Then I give you the floor to ask questions.

MODERATOR: If you have questions, can you possibly say what outlet you are from.

QUESTION: What's NATO doing about two NATO members facing off Northern Syria, and what are you doing to deal with the Turkish situation?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: We are following the developments in Northern Syria very closely. And we are, of course, concerned about the situation in Syria in general. The humanitarian catastrophe, the suffering of the civilians in Eastern Ghouta, but also in other parts of Syria. And of course we're also concerned about the situation in Northern Syria. Turkey has some legitimate security concerns. They have suffered many terrorist attacks. And we expect them to address these security concerns in a proportionate and measured way.

At the same time, NATO provides support to the Global Coalition to defeat Daesh. The Coalition has made enormous progress in Syria. Daesh controlled big territories not so many months ago; now they have lost almost all the territory they controlled. NATO provides support, for instance, with our AWACS surveillance planes. But NATO's not present on the ground in Syria, in Northern Syria. But, some NATO Allies are: United States but also Turkey. And I welcome the fact that Turkey and United States, two NATO Allies, are talking together to find ways to deal with the challenges and the problems we see in Northern Syria. And during the NATO Defence Ministerial meeting recently in Brussels, Secretary Mattis sat down with his Turkish counterpart, the Turkish Defence Minister, and I know that they discussed in detail how we can avoid increasing tensions and creating problems in Northern Syria, because the situation is already very difficult. So I welcome the direct dialogue and contact between United States and Turkey.

QUESTION: How important is Jordan within - in this regional level, strategy?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: So, Jordan is very important. Jordan has been a key ally for NATO for more than twenty years. And we have a strong political dialogue where we exchange views and analysis on how to deal with the many regional challenges.

But we also have a strong practical cooperation: training, exercises, cyber, border security, countering terrorism. And, as I said, we trained Iraqi forces at the King Abdullah Training Centre to help defeat Daesh in Iraq. Jordan just hosted the first regional exercise of NATO in this region, and Jordan participates in our exercises. So Jordan is a key partner. Jordan is important for enhancing stability in this region. And therefore we very much welcome that King Abdullah himself is so committed to this cooperation. He recently … he visited NATO not so many months ago, and I invited him again to come to NATO and to continue the dialogue. I'd also like to thank Jordan for being not only key when it comes to some of the military efforts to defeat Daesh and to fight extremism, but also in the political and ideological fight. And King Abdullah has stressed many, many times, and I totally agree with him, that this is not a fight between the West and a Muslim or Islamic world but this is actually a fight against criminals, against extremists, that are misusing a religion, and we should all mobilise against those extremist forces.

QUESTION: But, so you discussed with the Chief of Staff your goal in modernising the Jordanian armed forces?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: And so we discussed how NATO can continue to provide support in different areas: for instance, in cyber defence, in countering terrorism, in how can we do more exercises together; but also how we can implement security sector reform. And we also addressed an issue which is extremely important for NATO, our NATO and Jordanian armed forces are working together, and that's the role of women: to recruit and to strengthen the role of women in the Jordanian armed forces. So there are many different areas where we work together and where we support each other in a common effort to stabilise the region and to fight terrorism.

QUESTION: I just want to know, you know, could you just give us an idea about the regional ..... between NATO and Jordan ..... How you ..... And how do you – how do you ... your relations with the .... tensions .... Syria? [mostly inaudible]

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: So, we have a strong partnership with Jordan. And there are two main pillars in that partnership. There's a practical cooperation very much related to military activities, training exercises, capacity-building, cyber and so on, border control and so on. Then the other main pillar is political dialogue. And in my meeting with the Foreign Minister, the main focus was political dialogue: he updated me on the challenges in the region, including the Middle East peace progress, the lack of progress there; the Israeli-Palestine conflict; but also, of course, their efforts to try to re-establish the UN-led peace process for Syria. Because in the long run there is no military solution to the conflict in Syria. We need a political solution. And NATO Allies strongly support all efforts to have an UN-led Geneva-based political process to solve the crisis in Syria. I'm not saying this is easy, but I'm saying that this is the only way out. And when we see the suffering in Eastern Ghouta, it's obvious that we need an end to this fighting, we need an end – or we need to end

the killing of civilians, and we need a political solution. And that's exactly why NATO and NATO Allies so strongly support the efforts of the UN to reach a political solution.

NATO can provide support. NATO can train forces. We can provide support with our AWACS planes. We can train local forces. We can train Iraqi forces to fight Daesh. But at the end of the day we need a political solution. The military efforts are only there to provide the framework, to create the basis for a political solution.

MODERATOR: Yes, please.

QUESTION: Can you elaborate more on how they're going to have women in the military?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: Yes. This is something which is extremely important for NATO, and that is that we have to understand the role of women in military conflicts. Very often they are extremely vulnerable, and therefore we are now focusing on how can we make sure that we do … [inaudible] our training, of both our own forces but also when we train partner forces. For instance, we do in Afghanistan or in Iraq or Jordan or many other places make sure that all those forces are respecting the women, the women are reporting every time they see anything about the use of sexual violence as a weapon in armed conflicts. Because we have to protect women. We have to fight the use of sexual violence as a tool in armed conflicts. And we are working with Jordan in these efforts.

Then, in addition to this, we are also looking into how can we recruit more women into the armed forces. Partly because we think that will strengthen the armed forces. Because you have highly-qualified people coming into the armed forces, which the armed forces of Jordan, of Norway, of Iraq, many other countries needs. But also because, of course, by having more women in the armed forces we are also strengthening the gender perspective. And we have some soldiers, we have some officers which can deal with some of these issues in a better way that men often can't do. And this is about training. This is about implementing guidelines, setting standards. And our aim is to have a gold standard, a top standard, when it comes to respect for women and women's rights. And this is also about reporting, and to make sure that every time a NATO soldier or NATO-trained soldiers hear anything about sexual abuse or sexual violence in armed conflicts, they report. So those who are responsible are held accountable. And this is something we do together with Jordan now. We have some money for that, we have some trainers, we have some programmes where we work on how can we strengthen the role of women in the armed forces in Jordan as we do in other countries.

QUESTION: [Inaudible]

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: No, Jordan is a partner of NATO and is something called an Enhanced Opportunity Partner. We have five partner countries which have this status, and meaning that they are very close, a special close status. So, they are Jordan together with Sweden, Finland and Georgia and Australia are the five enhanced

opportunity partner countries. And we are proud to have Jordan as an Enhanced Opportunity Partner.

QUESTION: What would be the next step?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: There's nothing higher except for membership. But I don't think membership is a question for Jordan.

MODERATOR: Please, Reuters.

QUESTION: There are two questions. Turkey is buying Russian weapons. What's NATO doing about that? That's the first. And does NATO really believe these claims of a super-weapon, and what are you doing .about that?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: I didn't get the last question.

QUESTION: With dealing in super-weapons, does NATO really believe that?

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: First on Turkey and their acquisition of weapons: that's a national decision. It's for Turkey to decide. But for NATO what is important is that the systems which different NATO Allies acquire or invest in are interoperable with other NATO countries. And the S-400 missile defence or air defence system is a Russian system, and it's obvious that it will be very difficult to integrate that into a NATO-integrated air defence system. So therefore I welcome the fact that Turkey has also clearly stated that they are now also in dialogue with NATO Allies, including Italy and France, on looking into the possibility of buying something called SAMP/T, an Italian-French system, which is also a very advanced air defence system. If they invest in that, that of course can be easily integrated into a NATO-integrated air defence system. And I also know that they have been talking with the United States about buying Patriots. It's not for me to decide exactly what kind of system Turkey should buy; that's for Turkey to decide. But what is important for me and NATO is that what they invest in … investing in, is possible to integrate with the NATO systems. And it goes without saying that it's difficult to integrate S-400, the Russian system, but it's possible to integrate systems which are delivered by other NATO Allies.

Then on the speech by President Putin, this is a speech which actually increases tensions and makes a difficult situation even more difficult. It's not helpful, and it's part of a pattern we have seen over many years. Russia has invested heavily in their military capabilities, modernised both their conventional forces and their nuclear forces. They are integrating nuclear forces with their conventional forces both through their military doctrines but also through their exercises. And the risk of doing that is that it's risking reducing the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. And that is dangerous. And that's exactly why we have to prevent that from happening.

We have seen that Russia has deployed, developed, many new nuclear capabilities, nuclear weapons but also new delivery systems. NATO will not mirror what Russia is doing. We don't

want a new Cold War, we don't want a new arms race, but we are responding, we are adapting our collective defence when we see this pattern over many years from the Russian side. That's also the reason why we since 2014 have implemented the biggest reinforcement to our collective defence since the end of the Cold War. That's the reason why we are deploying more forces in the eastern part of the Alliance, increasing the readiness of our forces; but we are sending a message to Russia about that we are strong, we are firm and determined. We have the means, we have the capabilities, we have the resolve to respond to any threat. At the same time, we strive for a better and more constructive relationship with Russia, so we also make it clear that we are ready for dialogue. I welcome the fact that after two years with no political dialogue with Russia, since the summer of 2016 we have been able to convene six meetings in what we call the NATO-Russia Council, which is a platform for having political dialogue with Russia and to try to make some progress. Because Russia's our neighbour. Russia's here to stay. And so we have to continue to strive for a more constructive relationship with Russia. But his speech … let me also add one more thing. I think that the challenges that we now see in the nuclear domain, and what we see both with the proliferation of nuclear weapons in North Korea, but also the modernisation of the Russian nuclear forces over time with many new capabilities, many new weapon systems; combined with the fact that one of the most important nuclear arms control agreements we have – the INF Treaty, which abolished a whole category of nuclear weapons, the intermediate-range weapons – is now under threat. The United States has determined that Russia is in violation of the INF Treaty by developing and flight testing a new nuclear-capable cruise missile which is in violation of the INF Treaty. All NATO Allies are concerned about this. All NATO Allies call on Russia to fully comply with the INF Treaty and to, in a very viable and transparent way, make sure that they comply with the Treaty. That's extremely important, because in times with increased tensions, more military presence and more proliferation of nuclear weapons, we have at least to make sure that the treaties we have are fully respected.

MODERATOR: Okay, thank you very much. That's all we have time for.

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: Okay. Thank you.

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