North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Press briefing on the deployment of Patriot Missiles to Turkey

by NATO Spokesperson Oana Lungescu and Brigadier General Gary Deakin, Director of SHAPE Comprehensive Crisis and Operations Management Center (CCOMC)
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Good afternoon. Thank you very much for coming.

As you know, Patriot batteries from Germany, the Netherlands and the United States are now only days away from becoming operational in Turkey so we thought it would be timely to have a technical briefing today to explain the sequence of events that will eventually see NATO take control of these defensive batteries to help protect Turkey's population and territory.

Let me just remind you briefly that in response to Turkey's request, NATO Defence Ministers decided on the 4th of December last year to augment Turkey's air defence capabilities in order to defend the population and territory of Turkey and to contribute to the de-escalation of the crisis along the Alliance's border.

The deployment of the Patriots will be defensive only, but it sends a very strong signal of Allied solidarity.

I am very happy to introduce to you our briefer from SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), Brigadier Gary Deakin, who is the Director of the Strategic Operations Centre at SHAPE who will take us through this NATO effort and will explain how the batteries will be brought under NATO Command and control in the coming weeks.

The Brigadier will speak on the record, and if you have any specific technical questions on the systems, the Brigadier will explain any arrangements we have. We have got some staff officers on hand who will be able to help with answers on background after this briefing is over.

Brigadier…

Brigadier General Gary Deakin (Director of SHAPE Comprehensive Crisis and Operations Management Center (CCOMC): Thank you very much, Oana. Good afternoon, everybody. If I can just begin with a little bit more detail on myself. I'm obviously a British Army officer and I'm employed down in Allied Command Operations, coordinating operations at the strategic level. So when the strategic direction came from the NAC to SACEUR to deploy assets to augment Turkey air defence then the task came to my organization to make the plan.

I've got a number of experts who are with me. There are three officers in the front row here who are absolute technical experts on the detail of the systems, and so afterwards there's an opportunity... where there's a really difficult question that I can't answer, then they're ready to help out.

And my aim will be to really tell you the story as we see it right now, where we've come from and where we are at the moment, and then where we see this augmentation of Turkey's air defence going to.

And currently, it's all going according to plan which is really excellent news from our perspective.

Firstly, some context. The deployment is part of a plan that we already have. We have a standing defence plan for the air policing of NATO. And so this is not anything spectacularly new for us. The augmentation of Turkey's already robust air defence was an extra. It was within a framework of business that we already do.

We've also done this before, and indeed, The Netherlands deployed to support Turkey's air defence in 1991 and 2003. So it's not... it's not new and in that way we've been able to carry out this mission quickly to provide support to the Ally as requested.

Now, we've... when the strategic direction was given to us at the beginning of December, after the Foreign Ministers meeting, SACEUR immediately set about generating the forces required and we were very fortunate to have Germany, Netherlands and the U.S. offer Patriot batteries to deploy as soon as possible to Turkey to provide this extra support. And we also stood up the NATO communications agencies to provide the CIS, the Communications Information System support to the Patriots so they could plug into the NATO Command and Control network.

So the mobilization commenced almost as soon as we got the direction. And you will have observed that the U.S. were the first to deploy assets into theatre by air, into Incirlik, which we know is the air point of disembarkation. And their initial package arrived at the beginning of January.

And then The Netherlands and Germany sailed their assets from ports in Northern Europe some two weeks ago now and as you'll be probably tracking today, they've arrived now in Iskenderun in Turkey; are unloading and unloaded and are moving out to their positions.

We expect to have an initial operating capability this weekend. That's what we're aiming at. And so it'll be confirmed at the weekend, but we're aiming for initial operating capability this weekend.

What do I mean by initial operating capability? This is where we'll have the ability... NATO will have the ability to defend some aspects of the population of what we're going to actually cover in the big picture. The first units will arrive on station. They will plug into the NATO

Command and Control network and they will be then ready to defend the population. So that's what we're calling initial operating capability.

The full capability we expect to deliver... we're aiming to deliver, at the end of the month. That's our aim and that's when we'll have all the patriots in and complete. All the sustainment mechanisms in and the whole organization plugged into the NATO CIS coordinated with Turkey's air defence to provide the support... the NATO support to Turkey as requested.

And currently all that is on track.

And so The Netherlands are going to deploy to Adana. The Germans are going to deploy to Kahramanmaras—apologies for the mispronunciation—and the U.S. are going to deploy to Gaziantep. And those locations were decided in close coordination with our Turkish Allies based on the size of the population, how we could get the equipment to get the best effect. A number of factors were considered to get the best deployment options with the resources available from the nations that made the offers in this case.

So it was a very detailed process in close collaboration with our Allies to get the right lay-down of the forces that are deploying.

We estimate that once it's in place at those locations that we will provide protection against missiles for up to 3.5 million people, is our current assessment. So 3.5 million Turkish people under the protection of this missile defence capability in support of Turkey's air defence.

And I'd also emphasize again, I mentioned a couple of minutes ago about the CIS aspects. Lots of nations involved in that. There'll be NATO detatchments each location, providing the communication support, so a lot of nations involved, not just those from the contributing nations, and they'll provide that support to enable the command and control of the Patriots.

So that's where we are right now. We're just heading towards our initial operating capability, aiming to have the whole thing set up by the end of the month.

Now let me just, briefly I think, explain the capabilities of the system so you can then come back with some questions.

So a Patriot battery has got four main elements. It's a multi-function radar, which performs search identification and tracks potential targets. It's an air engagement control station and this is the only manned piece of equipment in the battery. And its responsibility is to make sure all the other systems are working and that the identification and engagement of targets is correct and in line with the procedures.

And the Patriot operators sit in this station and they're able to terminate an engagement, and control the engagement as required.

The battery then has a number of launches and this can be between four and six, depending on the mission and depending on which nation has made the contribution.

And then each missile, each launcher has a number of missiles, and again, depending on the nation, but up to 16, with a variety of different types of missiles. In this case we'll focus on destroying targets which are missiles. That is the way that this has been put together in this mission's case.

So those batteries, two in each location, as I've just described, are all connected together, so all six are together, and they're then connected directly to Air Command Ramstein in Germany. That's the operational commander, General Breedlove. And they're plugged into a Command and Control Centre there. And that Command and Control Centre is also... has situational awareness of what is happening in the region in terms of missile firings or early warning. So we're able to identify when there's some sort of missile fired that alerts the Patriot batteries, and then they can then observe the arcs that they've got in their azimuth and react accordingly if a missile is a threat to the population in that particular area that they're deployed to.

I think another point I just wish to really stress, which is really important, is the Command and Control goes to Ramstein, but there's a piece of detailed coordination into what we call the Combined Air and Operations Centre, which is in Eskisehir in Turkey. And it's there at the coordination is carried out with all the air that's going on. So to make sure that there's no risk of any accident, so that it's all very carefully controlled and coordinated.

So the air space is managed correctly. And again, this is, as I said at the beginning, this is normal business for us. There's nothing new here. We're used to this and there are procedures that are in place and it'll be correctly controlled and coordinated to make sure that there is no risk of any sort of accident.

Okay, I think that sort of covers the key points in terms of the lay down. I think hopefully I've described the... when it comes to it that the whole thing is set up and ready and we'll be ready, working very, very closely to our Turkish Allies in terms of augmenting their air defence to provide that defence to 3.5 million people. And should there be an alert on the early warning system, that will go to the Patriots and the Patriots from the nations will be ready to intercept and defend as required. And we're expecting the initial capability this weekend, that's what we're aiming at, and then we're aiming for the full capability by the end of the month.

And our current plans, and from my perspective sitting in operations, Admiral Stavridis's Operation Centre down in SHAPE, we're sort of initially planning that this will probably last for a year at least, and that's our commitment. That's what nations have said that they're prepared to commit to. Of course, there'll be decisions that may reduce that or extend it, but from our planning perspective we're planning to sustain this mission as required to augment Turkey's air defence.

If I can just clarify one really important point and that is, we're very closely integrated with the Turkish Allies in terms of the chain of command at all levels. So we have a very close relationship through each level of command, from the battery... and what I mean by that, the Patriot battery is located in an area where the Turkish military commander is going to provide him with some local support, et cetera, all the way then through to the coordination centre in the CAOC and then there are Turkish liaison officers who have gone to Air Ramstein and Air Ramstein has put liaison officers into the Turkish chain of command.

And in my own organization down in Mons, I also have liaison officers who have come from the Turkish General Staff to make sure that we've absolutely got the integration correct through all the different levels.

I think I've hopefully said enough, painted a little bit of a picture of what it looks like, where we are, and where we're going. I now stand ready to answer any questions and as I said, I've got a team to help.

Oana Lungescu (NATO Spokesperson): And as usual, please don't forget to introduce yourselves and we'll start with German Television. Just wait for the microphone Kai.

Q: I just have the question whether the whole area is now covered by the Patriots? Are there enough Patriots to cover the long borderline between Syria and Turkey? And would there... would there be the possibility to impact a No-Fly Zone if wanted with the Patriots that are at this border at the moment?

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Okay, well, firstly the whole... Turkey's border is 900 kilometres long, so the coverage is not... will not cover the border. We're aiming at what we can with the capabilities provided, so we've got as much coverage of the population with the capabilities that nations have offered, and our assessment is that 3.5 million people in the south-western corner, southern part of Turkey over those cities and those areas that I've explained.

We don't have the capabilities to provide it extensively in the area you just described.

The capability is not being deployed at all to have anything to do with a No-Fly Zone. It's completely defensive. And it couldn't be transitioned to do so at this time. The capability is not set for that. It's not designed. The orders are not in line with that and that's what we've set out to do. It's a purely defensive mission in order to deter and hopefully deescalate and provide protection to those 3.5 million people and support our NATO Ally.

Oana Lungescu: Dutch News Agency. Over there.

Q: Sorry, it wasn't me.

Q: Hi, Robert Blumen of the Dutch Press Agency. I've got a question about initial capacity. Will there be a difference between the Dutch, German and American Patriots so that the

Dutch will start, or will it be in general the initial capacity on Saturday/Sunday? You get the question?

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Yes, yes, I understand, yes. They're very similar in terms of capacity. So the initial capability is arriving, setting up, plugging into the system, having the CIS working, being part of the whole process. That is very similar to each of the nations.

There are minor differences in terms of capabilities and going through sort of start-up procedures. But that's very, very technical and perhaps you could... you know, if you want to come back off line with the experts to clarify. But broadly it's much the same.

Q: (Inaudible...).

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Oh no, no, no. Sorry, just to be absolutely clear. No, we currently see... I think The Netherlands will be the first to provide initial operation capability this weekend. And this is all to do with plugging in the communications technology, the site preparation, getting the sites prepared and our Turkish Allies have done a fantastic job in preparing the ground. You can imagine, you need level ground, you need shelters, you need things to put things in, and it just so happens in The Netherlands case all those things are aligning quite well. In the others it's still a little way to go to get those things completed.

Oana Lungescu: Reuters.

Q: Yes, Brigadier could you just confirm what you mean by initial operating capability? That means that the Patriot batteries, some of them, would be in place and ready to fire if necessary by this weekend, is that correct?

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Yes. Yes, that is our aim, to have initial capability, which means we can defend with that system in place and we're aiming for this weekend.

Oana Lungescu: National Public Radio.

Q: Teri Schultz with NPR and CBS. A follow-up on Adrian that may cause you to commit some redundancy, but does that... you say that the initial capability will mean that you could defend this weekend. What is the difference then between that and full capability? If you could just go into a little bit more detail on that, thanks.

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Yes, certainly, Teri. We'll only be able to defend where that site, that area that that Patriot unit is establishing in. In this case The Netherlands looks to be the first one. So that's the initial. And they'll only be able to do that with their first set of equipment that arrives. Because each unit's going to have a follow on... there's a tail that comes, a logistics tail, so to sustain the equipment. So more fuel, more spare parts in case something goes wrong, more manpower so they can sustain the piece.

So when we say full operating capability we mean everything's in place to sustain it for the duration, if you see my point. So it's just a case of right. Initially we're there already, we have the system ready to go to provide some defence in this area for that one, but the full capability will come when everything's in place.

Q: (Inaudible...)?

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: In those areas that we're going to deploy those systems to. Is that clear?

Q: I think so.

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Okay, come back if it's not, please.

Oana Lungescu: Agence Europe.

Q: Could you tell us what is exactly the threat coming from the Syrian army? I mean, how many... what is your estimation of the number of medium-range and long-range ballistic missiles, and do you know if in the past how many were already used? Thank you.

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: I'm not in a position to comment on the detail of Syrian capabilities. It's open source, of course, that they have used missiles inside Syria and that's out there to be seen. The capability we're deploying in support of our Turkish Ally is to protect the population of Turkey, and I said... the numbers I've already said, against the sort of missiles that are being used, that have been used in Syria. But this is not specific to a direct threat. We see this as a deployment to protect inside Turkey, inside Turkey's air space in case there was a threat that comes. It's a reassurance, be prepared to ready with capability from the Alliance nations to provide that support.

Oana Lungescu: Over there. Turkish media.

Q: Sertaç Aktan, Turkish News Agency, IHA. I want to ask, my question is also for Oana, if she can also give an answer. There has been some protests as soon as the Patriot missiles arrived in Turkey. What do you think about these protests? Is this kind of disencouragement in the mission from a soldier's perspective? And from Oana, what does NATO think about these protests, especially the things that happened about American soldiers, putting bags on their head, Turkish protests? Thank you.

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: Shall I start? From our perspective Turkey's a democracy. Protests are quite normal so this is not anything that will distract from the mission, and I'm completely comfortable with that sort of reaction. Oana.

Oana Lungescu: I'm not aware of any incident involving American soldiers. I am aware of an incident last night in Iskenderun where a small number of German soldiers were confronted by...

Oana Lungescu: ...were confronted by local protestors. This was a group of local protestors. No soldiers were injured. What we saw is a very professional reaction by the Turkish authorities who dealt with the incident. As the Brigadier said, NATO is an Alliance of democracies, and obviously we fully respect everyone's right of expression. However, there can be no justification for violence.

Remember that this deployment is in response to Turkey's request. This deployment is there to help protect and defend the population and the territory of Turkey and to deter any threats against Turkey's population and territory.

I think we may have one last question from NPR. I don't see any other hands up.

Q: Just an update one. Can you give us whatever the last count of Syrian missiles fired inside the country is and when the last time you saw one?

Oana Lungescu: I don't think I can add anything more to what the Brigadier said. Reuters. And one last from Agence Europe.

Q: Thank you. Just a follow-up of what you said, that you had a lot of experience in the nineties deploying already those systems. It was PAC-2, I think in the nineties, but what are the lessons that you have learned from the deployment back then?

Brigadier General Gary Deakin: I think what we've really taken from this one is understanding how to really get the coordination and the communications right, to make it very smooth. And if you think in this case the direction from the North Atlantic Council came at the beginning of December and it's been a pretty rapid turnaround. Nations signed up very quickly and were able to deploy the capability very, very quickly to have that deterrent effect we want to have in Turkey and to protect that population.

So I think the key lesson we've got from it is how to get the coordination and communications right so that we can make this thing happen very quickly in support of an Ally. That's probably the key takeaway that I would highlight from my perspective.

Oana Lungescu: I don't see any other questions, so let me just thank Brigadier Deakin for the very in-depth explanation of what we see happening over the next few weeks. And of course, once we're fully operational in Turkey you're invited to on-site visits and I know many of your colleagues have already been there and seen the Patriots being unloaded, spoken to the soldiers who've arrived, and of course to our Turkish colleagues on the ground.

Many thanks.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2013/01/23/press-briefing-on-the-deployment-of-patriot-missiles-to-turkey