North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Doorstep statement

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the start of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs
2015-12-01

(As delivered)

Good morning,

The security environment in which we meet today is dark. Terrorist attacks, violent instability, the breach of international rules.

These are serious challenges from many different directions. And NATO is responding.

Today and tomorrow, we will take the next steps.

First, we will decide on how we continue to support a stable Afghanistan. Because this is in the interest of our own security.

We will discuss how we continue our mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces during 2016. We will start discussing the funding for the Afghan forces after 2017. And we will look at ways to strengthen our long-term partnership with Afghanistan.

Second, we will step up efforts to deal with challenges from the south.

Because the rise of violent extremism and the recent terrorist attacks show we are dealing with a qualitatively new challenge.

The increased readiness and preparedness of our forces is highly relevant to the south.

We will work on further measures to assure Turkey’s security.

And we will enhance our support for partners to increase their ability to defend themselves.

Third, we will adopt a new strategy for dealing with hybrid warfare, which applies in all directions as well.

Fourth, we will discuss ways to restore predictability in our relationship with Russia. And to step up work on transparency and risk reductions. To avoid incidents and accidents spiralling out of control.

Fifth, we will review the support we have been providing to Ukraine in areas such as command and control, logistics and cyber.

And last but not least. Tomorrow, Foreign Ministers will decide whether to invite Montenegro to begin accession talks to join NATO, and become the 29th member of the Alliance.

So I've given you the six main points of this important meeting. Now I'm ready to take some questions.

Question: Mustapha Sarvar, Radio Free Europe: Mr. Secretary General, how important is Afghanistan for this ministerial meeting? Thank-you.

Secretary General: Afghanistan is important for NATO and Afghanistan is important at this ministerial meeting. We have been focused on Afghanistan for several years and we remain focused on Afghanistan. And at this meeting we will address especially three elements in our cooperation with Afghanistan.

The first is to decide on our military presence, the troop levels of NATO forces, Resolute Support forces in Afghanistan during 2016. The second decision, the second topic we will address is to discuss how we are going to start the campaign for mobilising the necessary funds, financing, for funding the national Afghan forces also after 2017. And the third element in our discussions on Afghanistan will be to address and discuss the long term political partnership, cooperation we are going to establish and develop with Afghanistan, the Enduring Partnership.

We also have the Afghan foreign minister present at the meeting and Afghanistan is going to be one of the main issues we are going to address and are going to take important decisions about our troop levels and sustainment of our operation in Afghanistan.

Question: Noureddine Fridhi, al Arabiya: Secretary General, I have a question about your strategy towards the south, mainly the war against Daesh. Is there any specific contribution that NATO is providing in the war against Daesh in Syria and Iraq. And on the other part of the Mediterranean, Daesh is already totally controlling the city like Sirte in Libya, may expand and threatening and (inaudible) Tunisia for example. Should the international community launch a second war at the same time, while it is, let's say, targeting Daesh in Syria and Iraq, and at the same time launching another war against Daesh in Tripoli and in Libya or should the international community wait, and if so, it may wait a long time because there is no hope for a political solution very soon.

Secretary General: NATO is playing a key role in the fight against ISIL and NATO and NATO allies are playing a key role because we are doing many different things to fight ISIL. All NATO allies are part of the coalition, the anti-ISIL coalition and I think it's of great importance for the coalition that both NATO allies but also many NATO partners are part of the coalition and they can take advantage of the interoperability that we have developed, our ability to work together which we have developed over many years through NATO military operations but also through NATO exercises. So the backbone of the forces in the coalition is provided by NATO and NATO partners.

Second, NATO as an alliance is very focused on how we can address the root causes and also mobilise local forces and help countries in the region to increase their capacity to defend themselves and also to stabilise the region. And that's exactly why we are so focused on how we can project stability. Not only by deploying our own forces but also project stability by building local capacity.

And that's exactly what we are doing when we now are focusing now on what we call defence capacity building. And train, and assist and advise local forces. We have agreed with the Iraqi government to do, to start training of Iraqi officers and we will do that first in Jordan, later on in Turkey, and train Iraqi officers. We have engaged with the government of Jordan to do defence capacity building there. Help modernise, train, assist them in increasing their capacities to stabilise their own country and defend themselves. And we are also working with Tunisia, a key country in North Africa in the fight against ISIL. So we are doing also a lot also when it comes to defence capacity building, which is key in the fight against ISIL, and building capacity in the region.

I would also like to add that what we are doing in Afghanistan is also very closely linked to the overall fight against terrorism and extremism. And Afghanistan is our biggest military operation and we will make important decisions at this meeting related to sustaining our troop levels in Afghanistan.

When it comes to Libya, just briefly.

I would say that there are no plans to launch a new military operation in Libya.

We fully support the efforts to try to find a political solution, a negotiated political solution. We don't believe that is easy, but we believe that is the only way forward to support all the efforts of the UN and others to try to find a political negotiated solution. Then we stand ready to do defence capacity building if there is such a political solution.

Question: (Ana Pisonero) EuropaPress: Secretary General, the first question on Turkey, so allies they should agree to prepare a package of security measures for Turkey. We heard that this should be approved as such in February. Is there any way to advance the package?

My second quick question is related also to the polemic of the incident that we had between Turkey and the downing of the Russian plane. Yesterday President Putin said that most of the leaders that he had talked to had actually admitted to him that it was actually not necessary to down the plane. I don't know if you share this assessment, although you have defended Turkey has the right to defend its own airspace. And would you agree with President Erdogan that Russia has to present evidence that, of Turkey's presumed involvement with the ISIS oil trade business, and also …

Secretary General: NATO has for decades supported Turkey as a NATO ally and we have standing defence plans for Turkey and we have over the last years also augmented the air

defences of Turkey and we will discuss at this meeting how we can continue to support Turkey, how we can continue to provide different kinds of assurance measures. But I would like to underline that when we now are addressing how we can continue to augment the air defences of Turkey, how we can continue to follow up the standing defence plans for Turkey. That is something which is not related to the incident last week because that's something which has been going on for several years and its part of what NATO does and its part of our long term commitment to an ally, Turkey so what we already have in Turkey is that Spain is providing a patriot battery, to support Turkey's air defences. The United States has deployed aircraft to support Turkish air defence on bilateral basis. The United Kingdom has announced that it will base some aircraft alongside other allies as part of NATO decisions. And Germany and Denmark, will contribute command ships to NATO's standing naval forces and other nations will also provide naval capabilities to our standing naval forces and we will have deployed some of these capabilities in the Mediterranean.

All of this is relevant for Turkey. It is part of the assurance measures for Turkey. And I also expect other allies to make further commitments and we expect to take some new decisions within weeks on the assurance measures for Turkey. But once again we have been there for many years. We have augmented the air defences of Turkey for several years and we have decided to address the need to support Turkey before the incident last week, so that has been on our agenda for a long time.

I think the focus now should be on how we can de-escalate, how we can calm tensions, and how we can address the need to improve, strengthen mechanisms to avoid that kind of incidents that we saw last week. And to create more predictability, more transparency and improve the lines of military communications, so we avoid or prevent that kind of incidents form happening in the future.

Question: Jonathan Marcus, BBC: With so many NATO countries engaged in air operations over Syria are you at all concerned, are your military advisors concerned by the deployment of a very powerful Russian air defences system near Latakia, the S-400, which can reach up to the Turkish Syrian border way out into the Eastern Mediterranean as well. It is interesting that in recent days the number coalition air operations over Syria seems to have gone down dramatically. Yesterday there was only a single strike with a drone in Syria. To your knowledge, are the Russian air defence hampering Coalition air operations over Syria, how concerned is NATO about the deployment of that system?

Secretary General: What we have seen over a long period of time is that Russia is deploying advanced military capabilities both in Syria, in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, but also alongside NATO borders in other parts of Europe. We have seen that up in the high north, we have seen that in the Baltic Sea, especially in Kaliningrad and we have also seen that in the Black Sea and in Crimea. And this part of a pattern where we see that Russia is developing what is called anti access and area denial capabilities. And that is exactly one of the reasons why NATO is adapting. That is the reason why we have increased the readiness and the

preparedness of our forces. That is one of the reason we have increased our military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. And that is reason also why we are now addressing how we can develop and strengthen our deterrence and continue to adapt our military capabilities to a more assertive Russia. And to a Russia which has deployed modern military capabilities alongside NATO borders in many places of Europe. So this is something we are responding to. We are following and assessing it very closely and NATO is adapting to this new security environment.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2015/12/01/doorstep-statement