North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Joint press point

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu - Secretary General's opening remarks
2016-03-07

(As delivered)

Good evening

And first of all, warmly welcome to you, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, it's great to see you here again, to see you at NATO headquarters and to be able to meet with you.

Turkey is a strong and valued Ally and I think it is important that we are able to meet in times like this where we are facing a lot of challenges that we have to respond to in a unified and firm way.

And we discussed during our meeting the serious instability we face on the Alliance's southern borders. Turkey is on the front line. And NATO stands in solidarity with Turkey.

Turkey is hosting more than two and a half million refugees. Bearing the brunt of the greatest refugee and migrant crisis since the Second World War in Europe.

And NATO is playing its part. We took swift decisions to deploy ships to the Aegean Sea.Our ships have been collecting information and conducting monitoring.

Over the week-end, we decided to step up our efforts and our support to assist international efforts to deal with the crisis.

We are expanding the area of activity into the territorial waters of Turkey and Greece, in close coordination with both Allies. So NATO is starting activities in territorial waters today.

We are expanding our cooperation with the EU's border agency Frontex. And we are expanding the numbers of ships in our deployment. So I welcome the contributions and the announcements by the United Kingdom and France.

I thank Turkey and you, Prime Minister, as well as Greece, for your efforts and commitment in implementing our decisions.

Our Maritime Command has also exchanged letters with Frontex.

This will allow us to exchange liaison officers and to share information in real time. So that Frontex, as well as Greece and Turkey, can take even more effective action.

This is a great example of how NATO and the EU can work together to address common challenges.

Our mission is clear. NATO ships are not in the Aegean Sea to stop or push back boats with migrants and refugees. NATO ships are there to help Turkish and Greek authorities, and Frontex, in their efforts to cut the lines of human trafficking and criminal networks.

Today, we also discussed the situation in Syria. NATO has decided to intensify intelligence, surveillance and monitoring along the Turkish-Syrian border.

This will complement the assurance measures for Turkey we decided late last year, including more AWACS presence and an increased naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean.

We also continue to augment Turkey's air defences with Patriots.

Despite reports of violations, the Syrian ceasefire seems to be largely holding.

This is the best possible basis for renewing efforts to reach a negotiated, peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. But we remain concerned by the Russian build-up in Syria and the eastern Mediterranean.

Russia's military activity in the region has fuelled the humanitarian crisis and driven more people to Turkey's borders. It has also caused violations of NATO airspace.

So more than ever, it is important to see calm, de-escalation, and dialogue.

So Prime Minister, NATO stands with Turkey. And Turkey stands with NATO. And our security is indivisible.

So Ahmet, welcome.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2016/03/07/joint-press-point