North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Joint press point

with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg - Secretary General's Opening Remarks
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Thank you so much Minister Çavuşoğlu. And I appreciate very much the hospitality you have shown me and my delegation. And we have just finished a delicious and very rich Turkish breakfast.

And I appreciate very much that we had this opportunity to go through a lot of different issues.

I am very glad to come to Turkey. The second ally I visit as the Secretary General of NATO.

Turkey is a key ally. Turkey is a strong ally.

So I am making this trip at the start of my tenure to consult with you, and to hear about your efforts, and your concerns at these challenging times.

To show solidarity of the Alliance as we face security challenges both to the south and to the east of our Alliance.

And to discuss the implementation of the decisions of the Wales Summit. To keep NATO strong. To help keep our neighbourhood stable by working with partners. And to keep the bond between Europe and North America rock solid. Minister, we have consulted on the situation in the region, which we monitor very closely.

ISIL poses a grave threat to the Iraqi people, to the Syrian people, to the wider region, and to NATO nations. So it is important that the whole international community stays united in this long-term effort.

I welcome the decisive actions taken by the United States, with many Allies and partners. And I welcome the recent vote in the Turkish Parliament to authorize an even more active role of Turkey in the crisis.

NATO is playing its role. Our Patriot deployment reinforces Turkey’s air defence.

And it helps protect Turkish territory and citizens against missile attacks.

NATO stands ready to support all Allies in defending their security.

For many decades, Turkey has been a steadfast Ally. Contributing to our collective defence. And to the stability of the region.

Your armed forces are making a significant contribution in Kosovo, and in Afghanistan.

We will continue to count on Turkey in Afghanistan. Next year, you will be one of the framework nations as part of our new mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces. And we are working together to ensure that we can launch the mission on January 1st, as planned.

At our Wales Summit, we took important decisions.

We are now turning those decisions into reality.

So I look forward to continue working with Turkey to keep NATO the bedrock of our security.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): (...) So I look forward to continue working with Turkey to keep NATO the bedrock of our security.

Q: Hi, Teri Schultz, on behalf of the International Press. Hum, a question for both sides obviously. To the Turkish Foreign Minister, your own citizens are demonstrating in the streets, asking you to do more militarily against the threat of ISIS. Why does Turkey seem so reluctant? Why are you so reluctant to make further commitments on the ground? And if we do see a massacre happening just across your border, will you intervene?

And to the NATO Secretary General, you say that ISIS does pose a threat to the NATO community, to the entire region. Beyond the Patriot missile commitment which, obviously, is solid, what more is NATO willing to do? Does... with ISIS...? If Kobani falls, ISIS controls a large swath of NATO's border with Syria, what kind of threat does this pose to the Alliance? What more are you willing to do? And does Turkey have a responsibility to NATO, as well as NATO having a responsibility to Turkey to do... to repel this threat? Thank you!

MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey): (TRANSLATION) Thank you very much, once and for all, with respect to fighting against terrorism and with respect to the issues and the events that have been taking place just across our border, we have never been reluctant.

Forty-six citizens were kept as hostages by ISIS. And we were cautious during that period. But even during that period in Iraq and in Syria we always underline to our colleagues, to our Allies what needs to be done. And this was always the expression that we shared from Judea to Paris to New York.

And with respect to developments in Iraq and Syria and the current picture in front of us, we've actually been sharing this for the last four years with some of our colleagues and Allies. Today, we see that some Allies are underlining that they really mistook the information that

was provided to them by Turkey. And they understated the importance of this attack. We have a comprehensive strategy for the region. And in order to provide security, we need this comprehensive strategy.

The political change that is taking place in Iraq is a new beginning for Iraq. And this is something that has to be evaluated. And the policy of the new administration is going to identify the future of Iraq. And we support them.

Today, as long as the Assad regime stays in Syria, the bloodshed, the tears-shed and the massacre will continue. And the Assad regime has killed more than 200,000 people. We're talking about: mass killings. They have killed 200,000 people with different methods, with chemical weapons, with air bombardments and with barrel bombs.

And today the Assad regime is the reason of this instability in Syria and in the region. And the radical terrorist groups have gained strength over this instability. Therefore, there is a necessity of a political change. And the Geneva Declaration is an important basis for this. As long as the Assad regime stays in power, this current status quo will continue.

There were different groups at the beginning. We now have different groups in the area. And we can never guess where the terrorist groups will target and will continue to fight. We have underlined repeatedly that we do support the air bombardment of our Allies. But this is a problem which you cannot resolve just by air bombardments. And you cannot change the balance of power in the region with these bombardments.

Maybe you can stop them for a short period; but you cannot clean the whole region from ISIS or some other terrorist organizations. You need to take into account all options including an operation on the ground. And we should support the Free Syrian Army.

There is a humanitarian dimension. And Turkey has never acted reluctantly on this issue. And just recently we have received more than 200,000 Syrians. They're from the Kobani region. And as we have supported our brothers coming from Syria, from Iraq formerly, we do continue to support these groups.

Turkey has never made any discrimination on a sectarian basis or has made any discrimination. This is an important burden. Today, we have spent more than four billion dollars for our brothers coming from that area. And the aid that has been made to Turkey is just around $200 million. And... But we cannot expect Turkey to act as the United Nations forever.

In terms of the intervention, we did share our opinion and we do continue. For instance, we need to establish a safe zone, a no-fly zone. This is important for the immigrants as well as for the internally displaced people, for the secure logistic settlement which is important for humanitarian reasons. And it is important for the success of the operation.

So we cannot expect Turkey to do a land operation. This is not a realistic approach. And with all these comprehensive proposals, we do have our consultations. Once we reach a joint decision, Turkey will continue to act and do its utmost. But our strategy and what needs to be done is to clearly also explain to our colleagues what has to be done in the region.

Knowing that this is an advantage that there are some brothers that are fighting amongst each other and they're trying to attack the property of Turkey and to our security forces, and what we want to say to them is that they need to evaluate that... Who's actually siding by the people in Kobani? And Turkey will continue to provide humanitarian aid to Kobani and the region. So taking advantage of this would not be a good approach. And we will not let anybody to intervene in this. And this is the message that I want to share, once again, from here.

JENS STOLTENBERG: First of all, I would like to underline that the core responsibility of NATO is collective security. And Turkey is a strong Ally. Turkey has the second largest army in the Alliance. But of course, NATO as an Alliance is always ready to support any Ally in defending themselves. And that's the reason why, as you mentioned, we have deployed Patriot system in Turkey to enhance the air defence of Turkey.

But Turkey being a strong nation itself, having a strong army itself, of course also has great capability itself to defend itself. But we will always be ready to support Turkey in defending itself because that's part of the Alliance and it's part of the collective security which the Alliance is built on.

We have close dialogue with Turkey. The situation is evolving. So I am quite confident that Turkey feels that NATO is standing behind them. And that we are working together with Turkey to defend... to help Turkey defend itself any threat, also threats from ISIL.

Then I would like to commend Turkey for what Turkey is doing. And as a part of the broad international effort to help people in need and to fight ISIL, I welcome that Turkey has shown some great hospitality and received a large number of refugees. And I welcome, also, as I said, the vote of the Parliament in Turkey to authorize Turkey to take even more active part in the broad international effort to fight ISIL and to create more stable situation in the region.

I would also like to underline that there is no easy way out. And it's a long-term effort. It's going to take time. And we need, in the long run, a political solution. NATO has stated that we are ready to help Iraq enhancing their security forces; to assist Iraq in increasing their ability to defend themselves.

We are already working and cooperating on the coordination of assistance, of airlift... of assistance to the region. And we are also working on enhancing our cooperation when it comes to fighting the threat which the homecoming of foreign fighters is posing on our nations.

So there is already a broad cooperation with Turkey, with all the Allies, with partners in the region to contribute to a more stable and less insecure situation in the region.

Q: (TRANSLATION) My question is to the Secretary General. Mister Tsochul (?) also mentioned that from the very beginning Turkey has demands of a no-fly zone and a safe zone. Do you believe that this no-fly zone is going to be an important solution to many of the problems that is facing, in the region? You have also said that you are protecting your relationship with Turkey. Could you give a much concrete example as to when would NATO be ready to intervene inside... by Turkey?

JENS STOLTENBERG: So first of all, I would like to underline what I already said, NATO is already deploying Patriot missiles in Turkey. And that's a very concrete sign on NATO's solidarity. And that's on the request of Turkey, almost three years ago, when Turkey wanted to increase its air defence capacity. And that's the reason why we have deployed. And that's also the reason why we are working to continuing to deploy Patriot missiles in Turkey. And that's against still existing threats of missile attacks against Turkey. So it's not a question of when NATO is going to show solidarity. We are already showing that by deploying our Patriot missile systems in Turkey. And that's one concrete contribution.

But then, as I said, and the purest answer is that Turkey is a strong Ally. Turkey has the second largest army in the Alliance. So what we are doing is to help and to support Turkey in defending itself.

Second, I have, of course, heard and seen that there has been calls for a no-fly zone and a safe zone. It was also discussed in the meetings I had this morning with the foreign minister.

I believe there is no simple and straightforward ways out of the problems we are seeing in Syria and around Kobani these days. It has not been on the table of any NATO discussions yet. And it's not an issue which is discussed in NATO. So I just welcome what I see as very decisive actions from several countries now in an international effort to fight ISIL by air strikes. And I also welcome what Turkey is doing in receiving a high number of refugees; and also the decision by the Turkish Parliament to authorize Turkey to play an even more active role in stabilizing the situation in the region.

Source: https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/events/transcripts/2014/10/09/joint-press-point