North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Remarks

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs and its Subcommittee on Security and Defence
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(As delivered)

Thank you so much Chairman and ladies and gentlemen.

It's really a great pleasure and honour to be back here in the European Parliament.

And to meet with so many distinguished parliamentarians.

And as some of you know I served as a member of the Norwegian parliament for 20 years so I know how important parliaments and parliamentarians are for the nations you are representing.

And I also know how important the European Parliament is for the European Union.

And moreover, I also know that 90 percent of the people living in a European Union country are also living in a NATO country.

Underlining how much NATO and the EU depend on each other.

So the relationship between NATO and the EU is of vital importance.

Today, Europe's security environment is more complex and more unpredictable than for a generation.

We live in an age of instability.

With complex and interconnected challenges.

We face a more assertive Russia which is destabilising the European security order.

And we face extremism and violence across the Middle East and North Africa.

Fuelling the worst refugee and migrant crisis in Europe since World War Two.

These challenges affect us all.

And NATO is responding.

Our response is building on three pillars

The need for more strength.

The need for more dialogue.

And the need to invest more in prevention, through our partners.

For each of these pillars, a strong relationship between the EU and NATO is essential.

Let me address all three of them and then I'm happy to answer your questions afterwards.

First, strength.

NATO is implementing the biggest increase in our collective defence since the end of the Cold War.

Not to wage war, but to prevent war

To send a clear signal.

That an attack on any NATO Ally will be met by forces from across the whole Alliance, including from North America.

This link between North America and Europe is crucial.

NATO binds the United States and Canada to the security of Europe.

The United States accounts for more two thirds of defence spending in NATO.

And has around 70,000 troops and essential equipment deployed in Europe.

After Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, America responded with a multi-million dollar reassurance initiative for Europe.

Earlier this month, US Defence Secretary Ash Carter asked the Congress to increase that funding four times, to $3.4 billion in 2017.

This will mean more forces, more training and exercises, and more prepositioning of equipment and infrastructure here in Europe.

It is a clear demonstration of America's enduring commitment to European security.

And it is a solid base for NATO's recent decision to increase our forward presence of troops in the eastern countries of the Alliance.

This presence will be persistent, multinational, and underpinned by robust exercises.

European Allies are also stepping up to the plate.

In 2014, NATO leaders agreed to stop cuts in defence spending.

And to increase spending to at least 2% of GDP over the next decade.

One year in, the picture is mixed, but it is encouraging.

In 2015, defence cuts were close to zero.

Five Allies now meet our guideline on spending 2 percent of GDP or more on defence.

16 Allies actually increased in real terms their defence spending in 2015.

These are promising first steps.

But we have a long way to go.

My second point is that while NATO is strong, we are also open for dialogue.

NATO does not seek confrontation.

We do not want a new Cold War.

And there is no contradiction between defence and dialogue.

On the contrary, strong defence creates the basis for political dialogue.

We continue to strive for a more constructive and more cooperative relationship with Russia.

We want dialogue because dialogue can increase predictability and transparency.

Dialogue that reduces the risk of incidents or accidents. And if incidents do happen, avoids further escalation.

The downing of the Russian fighter plane over Turkey underlines how urgent this is.

My third point, is to invest in prevention, by building local capacity.

NATO has to be ready to deploy large numbers of combat forces to manage crises. As we have done in the Balkans and in Afghanistan.

But in the long run, it is better to prevent crises than to manage them.

Better to build local forces than deploy foreign troops.

The crises we face clearly show that the security of Europe depends on the stability of its neighbours.

NATO's partnerships are an essential tool in the promotion of stability, respect for the rule of law, and human rights.

In the east, NATO is working with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, so they can better resist outside pressure.

Helping them in different ways to build their defence capacity, modernise their institutions and strengthen their reforms.

In the south, our partnerships extend across the Middle East and North Africa.

We are supporting the defence capacity of Jordan.

Next month, we will start to train Iraqi officers.

We are also working with Tunisia on Special Forces and intelligence.

And we stand ready to support Libya if requested by the national unity government.

On Syria, I would like to state that I welcome the agreement reached yesterday on the cessation of hostilities in Syria.

NATO supports all efforts to reach a negotiated end to this terrible conflict, and to set the conditions for a peaceful political transition.

What is important now is that all sides respect the terms of the agreement.

And ensure that it is both implemented, and effectively monitored.

All our 28 Allies are part of the Global Coalition against ISIL.

The success of the coalition is based on the ability of nations to work together.

Which NATO has developed over decades, from Kosovo to Afghanistan and through extensive exercises.

Two weeks ago, NATO Defence Ministers decided that NATO would join international efforts to deal with the refugee and migrant crisis.

NATO's Standing Maritime Group was immediately deployed to the Aegean.

Our ships will provide information to help NATO Allies, Greece and Turkey, as well as Frontex.

Supporting them in their efforts to cut the lines of illegal trafficking and illegal migration.

In recent days, I have spoken to President Tusk, President Juncker, the High Representative Mogherini and to Commissioner Avramopoulos.

We are now developing the necessary framework of cooperation between the EU and NATO.

NATO is strong.

We are open for dialogue.

And we are working with our partners.

The European Union is an essential partner for NATO.

Since becoming NATO Secretary General, I have made a special effort to bring NATO and the EU closer together.

Our efforts are complementary.

Each organisation brings its own unique blend of expertise, experience and capabilities.

I fully support the EU's plans for a stronger defence industry.

In particular, the European Commission's Defence Action Plan.

It addresses issues that are important to Allies on both sides of the Atlantic.

So a close dialogue will be mutually beneficial.

We are also looking at ways in enhancing our cooperation to address hybrid threats and hybrid attacks.

In key areas such as early warning, strategic communications, civil-military cooperation and cyber.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Separately, we are already making a difference.

But together, our impact could be much greater.

This summer offers important opportunities.

The meeting of the European Council in June and the NATO Summit in July will be a chance to cement our unity and our practical cooperation.

To show that, by working together, NATO and the European Union can add real value.

This will be a big year for cooperation between NATO and the EU.

A chance to set the course for the years ahead.

And to demonstrate how we are working not just side-by-side, but also hand-in-hand.

Thank you so much for your attention.

ELMAR BROK (Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament): We have a long, long list now. Perhaps you agree that if people were on the last list this morning that they had a superiority, that they have a chance to speak. The first stop is Mister Alli, from Italy National Parliament.

PAOLO ALLI (European Parliament, Italy): [In Italian] Grazie, Signore Secretario Generale, la mia domanda è sui reporti colla Russia. Noi abbiamo visto che gli interventi della Russia in Siria hanno reso molto – c'è la traduzione? Ci siamo? Abbiamo visto che gli interventi della Russia in Siria hanno complicato una situazione già difficile con effeti destabilizanti senza combattere il vero enemico che da [Inaudible] alimentando il radicalismo islamico, complicando i problema legati all'immigrazione e con un compleeso reporto con l'Iran e vediamo anche nueva attenzione al dombasso.

La settimana scorsa ci siamo incontrati qui a Bruxelles con il Consiglio Atlantico, l'assemblea parlamentaria de la NATO e la preoccupazione di una nuevo crescente tenzione colla Russia e apasso molto chiara. La mia domanda è: in questo contesto complesso, dove anche c'è il tema dell'assenzioni da parte da l'Unione Europea delle contrasanzione della Russia che dameggiano il, anche, gli aspetti legatti di scambi commerciali. Quali reali possibilità lei vede di reprindere un dialogo colla Federazione russa, un dialogo reale non basato sul riccati ma su un rispeto reciproco? È lei ha parlato di il forte rapporto tra la NATO e l'Unione europe; in che termini? Como conciliare l'operazione di… su la deterrenza che la NATO sta facciendo con relazione diplomatica di l'Unione Europea? Grazie.

ANGELIEN EIJSINK (European Parliament, Netherlands): Thank you, Mister Chair. Thank you very much. Thank you, Secretary General for being with us today and for your introduction. You touched upon different very important items. I would like to cut it short [?] into the Inter-Parliamentary Contacts. We do see you and meet you, luckily, in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, in the Inter-parliamentary Contacts, the IPC, and now in the European Parliament.

What we also discussed, and besides you already mentioned, is of course the direct response; we also discussed the spearhead, the VJTF a long time. And it also means that all of us, either in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, either in the IPC or in the European Parliament, we all have our own decision-making. How do we get there together, or as you mentioned, side-by-side, hand-in-hand?

And my question towards you is the following: would it be actually concerning to the Inter-parliamentary contacts, would it advisable to set up a network of permanent parliamentary committees, so-called standing committees, and that they could be called together at short notice when their governments decide to take part in a crisis management operation in faulting [?] either EU battle groups, EU-NATO's response force, or as we call the spearhead of the NRF, the VJTF? Looking forward to your answer. Thank you.

ANNA ELŻBIETA FOTYGA (European Parliament, Poland): Secretary General, welcome. I certainly share your opinions that strong collective defence enhances dialogue. We've been briefed by High-Rep Vice-President Mogherini this morning, many facts of discussions, deliberations, agreements during the Munich conference. And certainly during this conference, we've been able to listen to extremely harsh Russian speeches – both Prime Ministers Medvedev and Minister Lavrov's speeches. What actions actually you envisage to change this language of dialogue in our eastern flange? What is your expectation concerning the collective difference in this region?

Q: [Speaking in German] "By building resilience together with our neighbours and in the area of Defence investment". [Speaking in German]

MARIETJE SCHAAKE (European Parliament, Netherlands): Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you, Secretary General for your clear words, especially on not wishing to see a cold war. It's a very different message from – I'm over here – a very different message from what we heard from the Russian Authorities, unfortunately, also in Munich. But I think we are already confronted with a hot war in Syria where, unfortunately, Russia plays a very active role. And I understand your words of support for the agreement, but I think we're quite far from a resolution on the ground. Another important actor for NATO as well as the situation in Syria and internally increasingly is Turkey, I wanted to ask whether you are in conversations with Turkey about how to deescalate the violence and tensions in the South East and whether you considered this of importance for the Alliance? Thank you.

SABINE LÖSING (European Parliament, Germany): [Speaking in German] "Their deterrence and defence posture review." [Speaking in German]

FABIO MASSIMO CASTALDO (European Parliament, Italy): [In Italian] Si, grazie, grazie Presidente, grazie Secretario generale. Diceva prima que non c'è una guerra fredda, vogliamo sviluppare forse dialogo, però una discrezione di questo discorso, francamente è ancora di più nelle scelte politiche recente delle [Inaudible] molta forza e poco dialogo.

Voglio chiederle per quanto riguarda l'alargamento, si come sul agenda resultano in perspettiva futura potentiziali candidati, qual è la Giorgia e l'Ucraina che [Inaudible] sembranno essere rafforzate anche dal andamento recento dei fatti. Secondo lei, l'ingreso di i due paesi che hanno dei gravissimi problema di 'conflict' in questo momento presente nei loro territorio – scusatemi – [Inaudible] del sud, in un caso dombasso e, nel altro, non finire però per ascerbare ancora di più questo contrasto e questa potenziale tenzione colla Russia al posto invece di lanciare un proceso politico ed aspettare, magari, valudare veramente con una maggiore, in tempi migliori, operazione di queste genere?

Seconda domanda, rapporti della Turchia nella NATO, colla NATO: secondo lei, l'operazione e anche l'appogio, certa milizia della Turchia in Siria e sopratutto le operazioni militari che sta conduscendo nei confronti dei Kurdi in Rojava sono coherenti colle finalità di favorire la

transizione e il dialogo che lei mencionaba prima, perche purtroppe non disse che stanno arrivando. Mi sembra, invece, molto preocupante che vadanno in tutt'altro senso.

ELMAR BROK: [Speaking in German]

MICHAEL GAHLER (European Parliament, Germany): Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Secretary General. I'm here, over here. Over here. Thank you. Certainly our group and myself, we agree with you that we should not talk about a new call order. This is not the language that would be conducive to solving our problems, either on these or in the south or in any direction actually. What my question would be, rather specific: I'm sure you have also read the RAND report which asked for, or actually recommended, a deterrent force of a magnitude of seven brigades to be deployed in the eastern flange of NATO and specifically in the Baltics which would enable NATO to prevent, or act as a deterrent, against a quick Russian overrun of the Baltics. Now, this is not local enabling, this is not crisis-prevention with local capacity-building. Is this, or something similar, in the plans? Because this is of a different magnitude than the few thousand troops you were talking about so far. Thank you.

ELMAR BROK: The floor has now Mister Klich. No, Mister Borghezio first.

MARIO BORGHEZIO (European Parliament, Italy): [In Italian] Grazie Presidente, Grazie Signore Secretario generale. Una cosa ha stubido certamente molte persone durante gli attachi terroristici in Europa di il Daesh, che la centrale del reclutamento dei terroristi è Bruxelles, proprio la sede de la NATO. Non [Inaudible] corti come dal tronde, purtroppo non si ha cortato tutta la dilligenza politica europa che immigrazione significava anche porte aperte ciò e i [Inaudible] di Allah. Secondo, avete aperto una inchiesta sui contacti fra il camp familiar di Erdogan e i traffici di petroleo proveniente dal Daesh, dallo Stato Islamico?

Terza cosa, la presenza molto positiva delle navi della NATO sull'Egeo sicuramente contribuanno a bloccare, su quel versante, l'affluso degli immigrati e, in mezzo d'essi, magari, anche di potenziali terroristi perchè queste è una realtà innegabile, piacia o non piacia. Ma, non ci sarà, per conseguenza, un afflusso, una ripresa, degli sbarchi di infiltrazioni di questo genere sull'altro fronto? Non è che, in questo modo, riprenderà il flusso degli sbarchi verciò [Inaudible]. Per esempio le coste meridionali dell'Italia, e avete preso in esame questa hipotesi tutt'altro che dascartare in questa ottica che cosa prevede la NATO? Volete difendere solo le coste dell'Egeo o siete disponibili, interessati e prevedete di difendere anche il nostro paese?

ELMAR BROK: Thank you. Mister Klich.

BOGDAN KLICH (European Parliament, Poland): [Speaking in Polish]

ELMAR BROK: [Inaudible] Miss Gomes.

ANA GOMES (European Parliament, Portugal): Secretary General, welcome. How do you deal with the complicated member of NATO, but as well complicated for us as a candidate

country, Turkey, and with its sections where we have reports that some of its actions has been actually enabling ISIS and of course fighting the Kurds, not just the Kurdish from Turkey, but as well the Kurds who have our main alliance in fighting ISIS in Syria and in Iraq? Also, if there is to be cooperation with the EU, how do you assess the problems because of Cyprus, the talks about Cyprus is dis-improving or do you anticipate further problems in the relationship between NATO and EU because of Cyprus?

And finally, do you contemplate, if you're going to the Aegean, do you contemplate going to Libya and is this just on the seas or could this be also a ground operation? Are you articulating with the U.S. for the bombing that has being taking place in Libya?

ELMAR BROK: [Inaudible]

Q: [Speaking in Dutch]

ELMAR BROK: The floor has now Karel Schwarzenberg.

UNIDENTIFIED: Karel Schwarzenberg, yes.

UNIDENTIFIED: It's a mission.

KAREL SCHWARZENBERG (European Parliament, Czech Republic): Oh, yes. Please. Just, I wonder, why were are afraid of the word Cold War if you have all mildly said 'Lukewarm War' in the Ukraine where they laser [?] shootings and people killed. And so, which in the cold classic Cold War didn't happen. So, why do we complain about the expression 'Cold War' when we have this Lukewarm War [?]. [Audio cuts] have heard about NATO troops in Eastern Europe. I would be very glad if that would happen. But in a classical geographical division, Eastern Europe, as Byelorussia, Ukraine and Russia, Poland, become states of Central Europe. So, I would like to know if you really already achieved the progress that NATO could be the Eastern Europe or will be there only in Central Europe. Thank you very much.

ELMAR BROK: Herr Hellmich.

WOLFGANG HELLMICH (European Parliament, Germany): [Speaking in German]

ELMAR BROK: [Inaudible] Van Orden [?].

GEOFFREY VAN ORDEN (European Parliament, United Kingdom): Thank you very much, Chairman. [Inaudible] Secretary General. Don't you think it's rather ridiculous we have to go through this elaborate fan dance of cooperation between NATO and the European Union when, after all, they are more or less the same member states, and all, at least, we've done is really reabsorb the EU's defence structures into NATO?

Might I just ask you, though, what was the reaction that NATO of France's implication of Article 42.7 of the EU Treaties rather than Articles 4 or 5 of the NATO treaty in reaction to the Paris atrocities? Could I also ask you whether you have continuing concerns about the

revitalization of NATO and the willingness of allies to improve defence capabilities? And finally, really another aspect of the Turkey question: I mean, what more can NATO do to assist Turkey in the defence of her borders? And what particular difficulties do you foresee? Thank you.

ELMAR BROK: [Inaudible] NATO Secretary General.

JENS STOLTENBERG (NATO Secretary General): Thank you so much. I'll try to answer the questions. These are partly all bloc-based, so some of them I will group together. First, Alli and several others of you asked me about dialogue and how it's possible to have a dialogue with Russia when they are behaving in the way they are behaving in Syria, in Ukraine and in Georgia and other places. And then, I think it's extremely important to, first of all, understand that we never suspended our political dialogue with Russia.

What NATO did in the spring of 2014 after the illegal annexation of Crimea was to suspend practical cooperation, but we decided to keep chance for political dialogue open. Because, actually, when tensions are high, when the times are difficult as they are now, then it's actually more important to have a chance for political dialogue, to try to avoid the situation from escalating and try to provide as much predictability, transparency and risk reduction as possible. Because, for instance, with increased military presence, with more exercises and also with, of course, with the Russian military presence and airstrikes in Syria, the risks have increased.

And therefore, there is no, as I said, no contradiction between military strength, a strong and predictable military answer from NATO and that we continue to strive for a political dialogue because that's a way to reduce risks and try to avoid incidents, accidents before it spirals total out of control.

Let me also add that Russia is a member of the UN Security Council. Russia is a nation which many NATO allies, or all NATO allies, relate to, for instance, in the OSCE framework. And many NATO allies, and European Union members are cooperating or working with Russia on the bilateral level. And I think that we have to understand that it's not a question about isolating Russia, but it's a question of how we convey a very clear message to them. And that's what we do, partly by our military orientation, but partly by keeping open the chance for political dialogue, addressing many different issues: everything from NATO allies working with Russia on the Iran nuclear deal or trying to reach or implement an agreement on cessation of hostilities in Syria and many other issues. But again, this has to be based on strength and predictability. Dialogue is not a sign of weakness, dialogue is a sign of self-confidence: as long as we are strong, as long as we are united, then you're also able to engage politically with Russia on different issues.

Then, Eijsink, Miss Eijsink, on whether I should be in favor of establishing permanent joint parliamentary committees linking the European Parliament with the NATO parliamentarians. Well, it's an interesting idea, I haven't heard it before. I have an open mind for good ideas.

But at the same time, I don't think it's up to me to decide, but up to the parliaments to decide what they want to do. And I remember, from domestic politics in Norway, that we should always be very careful when we are in executive positions to try to tell the parliaments how they should organize their work. But, well, that's a possibility. To some extent, these are exactly the same parliamentarians, coming from the same countries; but there are some countries which are not members of both the European Union and NATO at the same time, and I know one of them very well. And they can also be good nations. So, they have to be respected, also those countries which are not members of both the European Union and NATO.

Then, Miss Fotyga, language or dialogue? Well, I think to some extent, I've explained it. But again, just to underline: dialogue, political chance, is an all-weather approach. And the need for a political engagement is bigger, not smaller, when times are difficult. And my own experience from Norway, being a Norwegian politician, in a country neighbouring Russia, was that actually we were able to develop a practical, pragmatic operation with Russia on energy, on border issues, on fishery and many other issues, military issues. Norwegian and Russian military authorities' commands meet regularly up in the North. We were able to develop that kind of practical cooperation with Russia, not despite of Norway's membership in NATO, but because of, because NATO provided the strength, the collective security which enabled a small country as Norway to engage with a big neighbour, the Soviet Union – and later on, Russia. So, again, the need for strong defense and dialogue is more urgent now, or more obvious now when the times are more difficult than they were some years ago.

Then, Mister Gahler, a military presence in the east. And let me say, it may be that sometimes, in eastern part of the lines; well, we have all increased our presence, we have more exercises, we have assurance missions, we have air policing, we have more naval presence in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and we have air policing – I think I mentioned. What we are doing now is that we are looking into how we can further increase our military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance.

I was also asked by one of you about exact numbers. I cannot give you exact numbers now. What we decided, at our Defence ministerial meeting a couple of weeks ago, was on the principle of our increased presence. Then, we will come back to the scale and the scope of that presence later on. At least, at our Summit in Warsaw in July. But what I can say is that the presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, the increased military presence in the eastern part of the Alliance will be multinational. Because that's one of the key aspects, meaning that we have, if we have or when we have, forces from different NATO allies, presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, then we are also underpinning their credibility, of our collective defense, of a collective security, meaning that an attack on one ally will be an attack on the whole Alliance. And that credibility increases as soon as we have a multinational presence in the eastern part of the Alliance and that's the reason we have decided to increase the presence, being it multinational. And then, of course, the size is important, but just the character, multinational forces, is important in itself.

Then, I was asked about, not Cold War, Hot War, yeah. This was Miss Schaake. And yes, of course, in Ukraine, in Eastern Ukraine, in Syria and all the places, this is not a question of whether we have a Cold War, there's hot war, real war going on. And this is also of course affecting us, because it's in our neighbourhood and if our neighbourhood is unstable, that of course also affects our security.

Then I was asked by several of you questions related to Turkey. Turkey is the ally, the NATO ally most affected by the crisis, the violence, the turmoil in Syria and Iraq. They are… Turkey is hosting 2.5 million refugees and they are contributing to the coalition fighting ISIL, in many ways, but not least by providing infrastructure, air bases in support of the coalition fighting ISIL. Turkey has also seen several terrorist attacks, and nothing can justify the kind of terrorist attacks we saw in Turkey, in Ankara, just a few days ago.

At the same time I think that the instability and the obvious challenges we see in Syria, and also spilling over into Turkey, just underlines the importance of calm de-escalation and that the Turkish response is proportionate. And that's one of the reasons why we are underlining so strongly the NATO support for all efforts to try to find a political negotiated solution. And at least the first step is the agreement between Russia and the United States to create the framework for cessation of hostilities.

Hopefully, that will then be implemented and that will create the basis for, also, to reassume [sic] or to start again the peace negotiations, having a more lasting ceasefire and a political agreement, political transition and I think all the dangers and the risks in that area. Also related to the situation for the Kurds just underlines how important it is to support all efforts to find a political negotiated solution.

Let me also add, when it comes to Turkey, that of course what NATO does is that we have assurance measures in Turkey, meaning that we have military presence, AWACS increased naval presence, we have air policing and so on, to make sure that we are able to defend all allies against any aggression, of course also including Turkey.

Then, Miss Lösing, deployment… Yeah, I think I've already answered that about the numbers. Mister Castaldo, dialogue, I think I also, to some extent, answered that and also Turkey, asked me about that. I think that's that.

Then, from Hungary, the question about the RAND, the report. Well, we are addressing exactly what they are analyzing in their report, and that is a risk for any kind of military aggression against any NATO ally in the eastern part of the Alliance. And that's exactly the reason why NATO has adapted and why we have responded and why we will continue to do so. We will do so partly by increasing our presence in the east. And as I mentioned, we have increased our presence with assurance missions with more exercises. We are now establishing eight small headquarters, also in Hungary. NFIUs, we call them, and they are critical because they provide the important link between national forces and possible reinforcement if needed.

We have tripled the size of the NATO response force. So I think we have to understand that the deterrence, the collective defence that NATO provides is based partly on national forces, partly on the deployment of multinational NATO forces, but partly also on our ability to reinforce if needed. And that's exactly the reason why we have increased the preparedness and the readiness of our forces. By tripling the size of the NATO response force from around 13,000 to 40,000, by establishing the spearhead force, which can move within hours, so at least a couple of days, and the reason why, also, we're now partly inside the NATO framework but also partly on bilateral basis, the United States, is prepositioning more equipment, investing more in infrastructure, establishing the small headquarters in eight allied countries in the eastern part of the Alliance. All of this enabling us to deploy forces quickly if needed.

So, we are responding to the challenges which are outlined in the RAND report and we will continue to adapt, to be able to guarantee the security of all allies.

Then, it was a question of many terrorists recruited in Belgium. Well, I think the terrorists are recruited from many different countries. Belgium is hosting NATO and we are grateful for that and I think because Belgium is very much aware of that, they have to focus on how they can also work together with other allies in Europe to counter terrorist networks and to be able to also do something with the recruitment of foreign fighters. So I welcome therefore the Belgium government and I'm very grateful for them hosting NATO and the NATO headquarters.

I was also asked about – several questions about NATO's presence in the Aegean Sea. And we, as you know, what we have decided is to assist, is to help with tackling the migrant and refugee crisis in the Aegean Sea. NATO will not turn back to boats; we will not do police activities in the Aegean Sea. We will help local authorities, meaning the Turkish coast guard, the Greek coast guard, Frontex to do their job. We will not do the job for them. That would be wrong. That's not our mission according to what we decided at the Defence ministerial meeting.

We will do reconnaissance, surveillance, monitoring and provide this critical information to the local authorities. Then, they have to do the rest. But, of course, everything we'll do with NATO capabilities – vessels, ships in the Aegean Sea – will be according to international law, meaning that, if a NATO ship is close to people in distress, a boat with refugees which is sinking, then all nations are obliged, all vessels, wherever they come from, are obliged to help those people. And of course that also applies for NATO vessels. Then, we will rescue the people.

And what we agreed with Turkey at the Defence ministerial meeting was that if the people who are rescued by NATO, if they come from Turkey we can return them to Turkey. So, that's what we agreed and now we are sorting out the technical and the legal details on how we are going to implement this decision made by NATO Defence ministers a couple of weeks ago.

Cyprus, Miss Gomes asked me about that. I'll just say that I welcome the efforts to try to find a political solution. I think actually there has been some progress. We never know, there's a lot of uncertainties, there have been many attempts before. But I think there's a real possibility now for an agreement which can solve the conflict in Cyprus and I very much welcome those efforts.

I was asked about whether all the nations, and then United States, will provide support for the enhancing of NATO's collective defence and presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, and the answer is yes. All allies are already contributing to assurance measures, air policing and allies are in different ways going to contribute both in the increased readiness and to the increased presence in the eastern part of the Alliance.

Libya: we stand ready to help to do capacity building, provided that there is a national unity government in Libya that requests our help. We're not going to Libya, but we will help if we are invited.

Then, the last thing I was asked about is where is East Europe and where is Central Europe? Well, I what I tried to say is that we have increased our presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. And the eastern part of the alliance, that is for instance the Baltic countries. So, that's a way to not be too precise on where East and Central starts and begins, or ends and begins.

Then, what we're going to decide in Warsaw? Well, it's too early to say because heads of states and governments have to decide. But I expect them to make decisions on how we can further strengthen our collective defense, how we can respond to both the challenges emanating from the South, but also from the East, with more presence and readiness of our forces.

The last thing was about Paragraph 42.7 and not Article 5 of the NATO treaty. Well, I would say that the NATO article 5 has been invoked only once and that was after the terrorist attacks against the United States, 9/11 2001. There has been many terrorist attacks, regrettably, in Europe since then with a high number of casualties without invoking Article 5. So I think we have to understand that Article 5 is something which is very, very seldom invoked. We are able to respond to terrorist attacks, we are able to provide support to countries fighting terrorism without invoking Article 5. And we are supporting the coalition fighting ISIL. All NATO allies are part of the coalition. We provide support by building local capacity. We are in Jordan, in Tunisia, helping Iraq. But also, for instance, by our activities in Afghanistan, is highly related to fighting terrorism, because actually the reason why we went into Afghanistan and the reason we are in Afghanistan is to prevent Afghanistan becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. So NATO is fighting terrorism, supporting the international coalition fighting ISIL without invoking Article 5, so I don't depend on Article 5 to be able to act.

There may be some questions I didn't answer, but I think I answered at least most of them. And I know there are more questions to come. So I think we should continue now with the questions.

ELMAR BROK: Thank you very much. The floor has named Mister Kelam.

TUNNE KELAM (European Parliament, Estonia): Vielen Dank. Secretary General. I'd like to recognize your resolve and clear message. And I'm among those who's a tenor, who support for the strengthened governators, multinational capacity and presence in eastern part of Europe.

[AUDIO CUTS]

TUNNE KELAM: … Significant because it's still a vulnerable area and Mister Putin may be tempted to discredit NATO's credibility to defend efficiently its smallest members. So my question is about deploying collective defense in case of hybrid aggression and hybrid war: are there…

TUNNE KELAM: … collective defense and support mix cases? Thank you.

ELMAR BROK: Thank you. Mister Kaili. Misses Kaili, my apology.

EVA KAILI (European Parliament, Greece): It's O.K. Thank you so much. Thank you.

ELMAR BROK: … for delegation for the NATO Assembly.

EVA KAILI: Thank you, Chair and thank you Secretary General. Some months ago, at the NATO PA in Stavanger, I had the chance to address you in my capacity as the Chair of DNAT. One of my points was exactly that, if NATO would participate in the refugee crisis, and you said that it wasn't the role of the NATO to do so, which I hear that you say almost the same now, but then it will be involved, it will actively participate overseeing procedures. So, I understand that the contribution is important and ensures the capacity of NATO and the Youth for Future Corporation, as you said. However, I would like for you, if it's possible to be more specific. If you could share some details on the operational planning and the coordination among the national authorities, from [Inaudible] NATO forces in the Aegean Sea.

So, what kind of – how many ships will be there, for how long, what time and how will the coordination happen? You said it's going to be just gathering information and exchanging data, but then if you say refugees then you will have to return them back to Turkey. At the same time, given the fact that only yesterday we had 36 violations of the airspace and we also have the sea borders being violated by Turkey.

How do you think NATO could respond in case this thing continues to happen the time you will be there, with your presence there and in case Turkey uses NATO operation as a vehicle to question Greek sovereignty over the Aegean? And – I'm sorry just a last one – if an active

participation of the European Parliament would be possible, since we face common threats. Thank you very much.

ELMAR BROK: Equal disposition.

[LAUGHTER]

ELMAR BROK: Mister Jurek has the floor.

UNIDENTIFIED: Selective [inaudible]. Selective.

ELMAR BROK: Mister Jurek. Mister Jurek, still here?

UNIDENTIFIED: No.

ELMAR BROK: No. Then has the floor… Hmm-hmm, sitting there. Zurich.

UNIDENTIFIED: Jurek!

ELMAR BROK: Jurek. I've said Jurek, but the translation of Jurek into Polish was wrong.

MAREK JUREK (European Parliament, Poland): [Speaking in Polish]

ELMAR BROK: Mister Artini may have to remind you on the "Fotyga limit", 1:15?

MASSIMO ARTINI (European Parliament, Italy): [Speaking in Italian]

ELMAR BROK: Michèle Alliot-Marie.

MICHÈLE ALLIOT-MARIE (European Parliament, France) : [In French] Merci monsieur le Président. Monsieur le Secrétaire-général, quelques questions très précises dont je comprendrai qu'éventuellement vous ne puissiez pas me les donner tout de suite et qu'on nous a envoyées par la suite. Elles concernent les participations respectives des différents partenaires de l'OTAN. J'aimerais savoir quelle est l'état actuel des contributions en matière d'hommes participant aux opérations et de financement des États-Unis, des différents états européens et des autres états non-européens mais participant à l'OTAN.

D'autre part vous nous avez indiqué, en vous en réjouissant, que des dépenses militaires ont augmenté dans plusieurs pays pour atteindre deux pour cent. Je serais intéressée à savoir quels sont ces pays, si ces montants incluent ou non les pensions des militaires – car ce sont des variables importantes – et ensuite vers quel type de dépenses ces augmentations sont orientées. Est-ce que c'est vers le recrutement des hommes, vers leur entraînement, est-ce que c'est vers les équipements, et si c'est vers les équipements, vers quel type d'équipement – l'OTAN manque-t-elle toujours autant d'hélicoptères dans ses opérations, ce que sont ses opérations. Et d'autre part quels sont les pays d'origine de ces équipements, c'est-à-dire par quel pays sont-ils fabriqués.

Q: Thank you very much, Mister Chair. Mister Secretary General, you are talking about interconnected challenges. At the same time, you know, European Union and NATO are two organizations that are promoting and defending the same values. Recently, NATO came, on my opinion, quite late to support the European Union to monitor and guard its external border on the Aegean Sea. Don't you think that, to the next NATO Summit and NATO-European Council, we should have to propose a permanent mechanism of cooperation on security and defence issues between NATO and European Union?

And secondly, the Russian authorities are undermining, you know, and everybody knows that the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia – three countries very important for the Euro-Atlantic area security and defence on Eastern Europe. What NATO is envisaging in the next future to support these countries, eventually to raise their status with NATO? Thank you.

DANIEL DALTON (European Parliament, United Kingdom): Thank you. Mister Dalton, representing Great Britain here. I'm delighted that we are one of the countries that are fulfilling out two percent of GDP obligation to defence spending. I'm delighted to hear you, Sir, actually talk about dialogue with Russia. In our own Parliament, there is merely hostility, antagonism and suspicion towards Russia.

I'm keen to find out from you, Sir, what reaction you are getting in your capacity, representing us, with your dialogue with Russia and how you are trying to build up personal relations with your counterparts in Moscow to try to take some of the tension and strains out of the ever-increasing deterioration of relations between our two areas. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED (European Parliament, Greece): [Speaking in Greek]

ELMAR BROK: Thank you. The floor has now Mister Halleraker.

ØYVIND HALLERAKER (European Parliament, Norway): Thank you. Mister Secretary General. I'd like to draw your attention to the North. We are facing military strategic changes in NATO's maritime area of the responsibility also in the northern area. So, Norway has stepped up its maritime presence in response with increased patrolling by submarines and maritime Petro aircrafts. How is NATO planning for the maritime domain in the North Atlantic, in the process towards Warsaw? Thank you.

Q: Thank you very much, Mister Chairman. Mister Secretary General, I welcome very much your participation and your contribution. I have two short questions. First, how do you assess the security situation into the Black Sea region and what is the NATO response to it? And the second: we're speaking about the EU defence developments now. What, from a NATO perspective, should be done in order to guarantee the complementarity and compatibility between the two developments, EU Defence and NATO? I thank you very much.

ELMAR BROK: Mister Obreja.

UNIDENTIFIED: Mister Obreja from Romania National Parliament. Has he gone?

ELMAR BROK: The white hair.

UNIDENTIFIED: Has he gone?

MARIUS-LUCIAN OBREJA (European Parliament, Romania): [Speaking in Romanian]

ELMAR BROK: Thank you. I would like to propose you that everyone has now only one minute and we have perhaps a chance that everyone gets the floor, perhaps the chance. And therefore we have to do that in order and take mostly people first who have not yet spoken today. That is also one of the reasons that people who have already one or two times spoken should be now not in this round again the first ones. So I would like to give the floor now to Ms. Gill.

NEENA GILL (European Parliament, United Kingdom): Thank you, Chair. I did want to ask a question on the side of warfare, and I know that Deputy Artini has already asked for it, which is around that it's becoming increasingly a big threat and as much as a conventional conflict. And it's important too that it is used by the Russians in Ukraine and China also are using it. So I think there's a critical role for NATO in addressing this. But NATO is focused on resilience against cyberattacks.

What I would like to ask you, Secretary General: What is the scope for opening up the mandate to include a more proactive approach to improving overall deterrence?

And secondly, can I just say quickly I welcome your words that a strong Britain and a strong Europe is contributing to stability. Could you share with me your views as possible negative consequences of Brexit, given that threats are increasingly occurring cross-border and where we need greater cooperation within NATO? Thank you.

ELMAR BROK: Mister Papadakis.

KONSTANTINOS PAPADAKIS (European Parliament, Greece): [Speaking in Greek]

ELMAR BROK: Mister Androulakis.

NIKOS ANDROULAKIS (European Parliament, Greece): [Speaking in Greek]

DORU-CLAUDIAN FRUNZULICĂ (European Parliament, Romania): Secretary General, I think one of the most valuable tools of our alliance after 1990 was definitely the open-door policy, the enlargement process, and I think the new allies coming from the Central-Eastern Europe represent the best examples.

Recently, we welcomed also in my country Romania the decision on Montenegro. What about Georgia? And I'm speaking on this subject beyond the substantial package that was adopted by the alliance for Georgia and after many years of talks after the NATO summit in Bucharest

in 2008 on this subject, I'm perfectly aware the situation, it's a complex one. But within a very honest discussion, first of all among the allies, this is a friendly challenge addressed to you. What should be the miraculous solution on Georgia's path towards the alliance, having in mind a principle that all the time we have stated all together Russia should not have a veto right on our enlargement policy? Thank you.

SOFIA SAKORAFA (European Parliament, Greece): [Speaking in Greek].

ELMAR BROK: [Inaudible] is longer than you should. Now, as the highlight of late afternoon, Mr. Khan.

AFZAL KHAN (European Parliament, United Kingdom): Thank you, Chair. I cannot believe this. [Laughing]. Secretary General, thank you. Just two quick questions. I know you talked about the announcement of a ceasefire in Syria. Now, if this doesn't take effect and there are countries talking about moving troops there's, what would be… NATO would be involved in this or not?

And the second one is in December, Montenegro was formally invited by allied foreign ministers to become the 20th member of the Atlantic alliance. What are the prospects for another NATO-aspiring country such as Bosnia-Herzegovina? Thank you.

Q: [Speaking German].

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you so much, thank you for all the quest… Thank you so much, thank you for all the questions. And let me again try to answer at least most of them.

First, to Mr. Khan on hybrid. Hybrid is really an important issue because hybrid is something which we really have to be prepared for. This combination of military and non-military aggressive actions, deception, covert and overt operations, cyber and many different kinds of threats which, as… as I say, aim to be able to attack a country without having a full-fledged war but destabilizing the country, and also being able to reduce warning times so it's too late to act when you are aware that you are under attack. That was to some extent what happened in… in Ukraine or when… when Russia annexed Crimea. They did in a way admit that they were responsible for aggressive actions in Crimea and they suddenly have annexed the whole peninsula.

So we have to be prepared for responding to hybrid threats. And that's exactly what we are doing and we have all done a lot; we have to do more. It's about for instance early warning, the ability to understand better what is going on. And that's the reason why we are increasing and improving the way we share intelligence inside the alliance. We are increasing our capacity to do intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

We will next year have the new drones, the alliance ground surveillance system in place with new drones which are an important NATO capability which will increase significantly NATO's

ability to look, to see, to understand what is taking place on the ground. And that is an important part of a response to many different kinds of hybrid threats and hybrid challenges.

We have to be able to be very flexible and tailored when we respond. So, more special operation forces is part of a response to hybrid threats. We are expanding our special operation capabilities.

To be able to act quickly and also to be able to deploy forces before the crisis really become dangerous is also a part of response to hybrid threats. And that's the reason why we have increased substantially or significantly the readiness of our forces with a new Spearhead Force and the tripling of the size of the NATO Response Force. So we can deploy if we see that there is a danger or a threat for any kind of hybrid situation.

Cyber is part of that too. And I was asked by several of you about cyber. Cyber, well, we are partly stepping up what to do to protect our own systems, which is important. We are also doing more when it comes to NATO's ability to help allies in protecting their systems. We have established teams, emergency teams which can be deployed and help protecting the networks of allied countries which are under cyberattacks.

And we also decided that a cyberattack can trigger Article 5, can also be regarded as serious as a conventional attack because a cyberattack can actually have devastating or very serious effects. And, therefore, we now regard cyberattacks as something which can trigger the full response of the alliance collective defence, the Article 5.

Then, Ms. Kaili of Greece asked me about the refugee crisis. Well, NATO, again, we are responding, we are assisting, we are helping, but NATO's role is more a support role. So, again, NATO will not stop the boats. NATO will not turn back the boats with the migrants. What we will do is that we will help local authorities to do their work, and Frontex. And of course, then the success is absolutely dependent on Turkey, Greece, Frontex. It's not… it's not our mandate to do policing in the Aegean Sea.

I think that the strength of what NATO is doing in the agency is partly that… that, of course, the European Union is playing a very important role, but Greece is member of the European Union but Turkey is not. So NATO is bringing in a way two countries, Turkey and Greece, together. That is important in itself.

The other thing which is important with the NATO presence in the Aegean Sea is that we established a cooperation between NATO and the European Union. But, again, it's up to Frontex, Greek and Turkish authorities to, in a way, use the support they get from NATO. We will not stop, we will not turn back the boats.

Then, of course, there are challenges, there are problems, there are legal issues. These are the issues we are discussing and addressing as we speak. So we have made the decision

and now we are in the… in the business of, as I say, solving all the practical and legal issues. But I have seen Greek… Greece and Turkey working together in the alliance for years.

And since I became Secretary General I have seen how the two countries are able to stand together, to work together. And it was actually NATO 28 ministers, including the Greek and the Turkish defence ministers present at our meeting two days… two weeks ago, that made this decision. So this is not some people in Brussels developing an idea and then try to force NATO allies to implement it. It's 28 allies seating together in Brussels and making the decision together.

And then we are now, as I say, working on how to implement. So therefore, I'm not able to answer all the questions about operational details, but I feel very certain about that when we have made a strong political decision, when we all see the need for doing more to cope with, to tackle the migrant and the refugee crisis, and this is taking place in the Aegean Sea, affecting both Turkey, Greece, the whole of Europe, then we should show also the political strength to implement that decision as soon as possible.

And we have already deployed ships in the area, and I can… you also wanted to know about the number of… the number of ships. Well, that varies a bit, but so far there have been between two and five ships in the area monitoring the situation because they already have the mandate to do monitoring and, of course, they have done so in the Aegean Sea already.

Then… then, yeah, just to underline, NATO's presence in the Aegean Sea is… is… we are there to deal with a migrant and refugee crisis, not to do police work or not to monitor the air space of any nation. So we will do… we will focus on our mandate, and that is to help deal with the migrant and refugee crisis.

Then… yeah, actually [inaudible]… the North Stream. Mr. Jurek, you asked me … as you also spoke… Aegean Sea, I think I all answered. But then the North Stream. Well, I think it's something which has to be decided by the nations involved and to… to the extent it affects the European Union, decided by the European Union. It's not for NATO to decide whether it's… it's good or bad to develop North Stream too, so I think I have to leave that to the countries which are part of the project and to the extent it affects EU regulations, also the European Union.

Then I would like to add about Syria, because you also asked me about that. NATO decided both to increase or to assist with the migrant and refugee crisis in the Aegean Sea, but we also decided to step up our support for Turkey monitoring surveilling… surveillance along the Turkish/Syrian border. So we are also looking into how we can do that because, of course, that's also part of the migrant and refugee crisis, the very open border between Syria where all the migrants crossing the border between Syria and Turkey. At least, that has been a challenge for a long time. Now, the border is closed, but at least we will continue to monitor the border.

Then I was asked about… Mr. Artini on cyber. Yeah, I think I have already answered about cyber. Then Ms. Alliot-Marie, you asked me about defence spending. First, which nations? Well, it is the United States, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Poland and Greece. They are the five nations spending more than two percent. France is very close to two percent and many allies have now started to increase, but those are the five which have… which are at two percent or above.

What they will spend money on? Well, that differs, but more and more nations are investing more in equipment, and we welcome that because part of the decision we made in Wales was not only to increase defence spending but also to increase more on equipment, modern equipment, quality. We have to spend more but also to spend better.

The two percent includes pension, and that's just in a way a standard. So that's the way we compared. We could of course have taken pension out, but then have to take pension out from all nations and also dating it back, because if you are going to compare figures over time and between nations, you have to compare the same kind of figures. So as a NATO standard, that we include pensions.

Then Ms. Frunzulică, sorry, from Romania, what we do for… no, it's Mr., I think… what we do for… for our Eastern partners. Well, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia. Fundamentally, we do three things. We provide strong political support for their independence, for their integrity, for their territorial integrity. So we provide strong political support for all the three nations. And, of course, Georgia, Ukraine being close partners, and Moldova also, we have defence capacity building. So we work close with them.

The other think we do is to provide practical support in different ways. For Ukraine, we have trust funds. We do capacity building. We help them with… with command and control, with logistics. And in different ways we provide practical support, also on a bilateral basis; for instance, training of forces in Ukraine done on a bilateral basis of NATO allies.

And then we also support the efforts to try to find political solutions to the conflicts and especially in Ukraine we, of course, strongly support the efforts of… to implement the Minsk Agreements and to find a peaceful negotiated solution to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Then I was asked about, Mr. Folsinsky [Phon.], dialogue also takes place. Yeah. And whether is a… first of all, dialogue takes place already. As I mentioned, in the framework of the UN Security Council-OSCE bilateral level, Iran nuclear deal, or now on the cessation of hostilities in Syria, it's something we have reached through dialogue, political contacts also with Russia. It's not easy and we don't know whether we will be able to hold a NATO-Russia Council meeting, but at least Mr. Lavrov and I agreed when we met in Munich that we will explore the possibilities of holding or convening a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council.

Then I think I have spoken a lot about Aegean Sea, so that's already answered. Mr. Halleraker from Norway. I agree, NATO has to be able to also look to the North, and NATO

has to have a presence in the North. But then, as a Norwegian, you know and I know that NATO's main presence in the North is Norway. So actually Norway has to, as I say, be there with military capabilities. Denmark is also there, but there is Norway and a very important part of NATO presence in the North. And Norway has just invested in new excellent frigates, and the reason why we bought very expensive frigates is that they increase our ability to… to show presence in the Bering Sea, the Norwegian Sea and in the North.

We are going to, or Norway is going to invest in… in new F-35 fighter planes, also to increase Norway's and NATO's ability to be present in the North. Hopefully, Norway will also buy new submarines and… and other key capabilities. So NATO is present in the North, not least through the presence of Norway.

Then of course, I also welcome more exercises. I know that next week there will be a multinational exercise in Norway underlining that, of course, Norway, as no other ally, is alone. Norway is part of a collective defence, also then supported by many other, all other allies.

Hybrid was the next question. I think I already answered that. Cyber, I think I also answered. Aegean Sea, already answered.

Then Georgia. Well, we will continue to support Georgia. Georgia is making progress. It is important that they continue to implement the reforms. We will help them. We had a substantial package and I think it's important to know that NATO is present in Georgia. I just… some months ago I participated in the inauguration of the new Training and Evaluation Centre. We have exercises so we are supporting Georgia on their way towards a closer relationship with NATO and on the way towards membership.

Then… then Ms. Sakorafa from Greece. Sakorafa from Greece. Well, I… I agree with you. I understand that for most politicians, or actually all the politicians I know, they would prefer to spend money on health, on education, on infrastructure instead of defence. So it's always difficult to mobilize money for defence. On the other hand, when… and I, when I was minister of finance in the 1990s, I reduced defence spending in Norway.

Q: Oh!

JENS STOLTENBERG: Yeah, I did. But not tell anyone, but I did. Promise to keep it a secret.

[LAUGHING]

JENS STOLTENBERG: No, but that was actually after the Cold war. And tensions went down and it was actually a peace dividend. So I think it's quite logical that when tensions are going down, it's possible to decrease defence spending. But then you have to show the ability to increase defence spending when tensions are going up. And now tensions are increasing, so then we have to increase defence spending.

And to be honest, I also increased defence spending in Norway. We started to do that in 2008. So I have both decreased and increased defence spending in my national capacities.

And Greece is actually one of five countries which allocate two percent to defence. So Greece is actually another country which has been able to prioritize defence spending, even in a very difficult fiscal situation.

The last thing I will say about NATO, the Aegean Sea, Greece, Turkey and all these, is that it's not the end. NATO is not someone else and then 28 allies, many of them members of the European Union, are some other. NATO, we are the allies. So it's not me inventing the idea that NATO should move into the Aegean Sea. It was 28 allies agreeing. And all decisions taken in NATO are taken by consensus, so we will never do anything which is contradicting the wishes of any NATO ally.

So we are based on consensus and therefore, of course, whatever we do in the Aegean Sea will be agreed by Turkey, by Greece and by all the other 26 allies. And I'm certain that we have a way to agree because this is important for Greece, for Turkey and for the whole of Europe and the whole alliance.

That's, I think… no, Mr. Khan, troops in Syria. NATO doesn't have any troops in Syria. There is no NATO military presence in Syria and there are no plans for any NATO military presence in Syria. But NATO is present in Turkey, being able to help Turkey defend itself against any aggression against Turkey. But we are not present in Syria, but we are augmenting the air defences of… of Turkey. We are… so we have AWACS planes. We are doing other kinds of military activities in Turkey to protect Turkey against aggressions, not to go into Syria.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, well, they still have way to go when it comes to reforms to meet NATO standards. So I think it's not possible for me to say anything about when we can make progress on Bosnia-Herzegovina's ambitions to join the alliance.

It's always a pleasure to meet you. As parliamentarians in all countries, you have a lot of questions and I tried to answer them as, as I say, as good as possible. So thank you again for your attention.

[APPLAUSE]

ELMAR BROK: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Secretary General, and also on the applause. We very much appreciate the time that you have taken and also how do you explain to us the situation. I think it was both for the European Parliament, national parliaments, joint information which is most valuable for the proceedings. Thank you very much. And I hope we can call you in some time again to a similar event. Thank you.

JENS STOLTENBERG: Thank you.

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