North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Press conference

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Foreign Ministers
2018-04-26

(As delivered)

Good morning.

NATO’s Foreign Ministers will meet tomorrow to prepare for the upcoming Summit in July.

We will begin with a meeting to discuss Russia.

For several years, Moscow has shown a pattern of dangerous behaviour.

This includes:

the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea,

the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine,

meddling in democratic processes,

cyber-attacks,

and disinformation.

Russia also backs the brutal regime in Syria, which has repeatedly used chemical weapons.

It is also highly likely that Russia was behind the nerve agent attack in Salisbury.

NATO has responded with resolve and unity.

We have undertaken the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War.

We have strengthened our presence in the eastern part of the Alliance;

Increased the readiness of our forces;

Enhanced our cyber defences;

Stepped up our efforts to counter hybrid activities;

And Allies are investing more in defence.

But we continue to see attempts to intimidate and interfere in Allied countries.

So we must continue to adapt to hybrid challenges.

And Ministers will examine what more we can do.

When tensions are high, it is even more important to talk with Russia.

So NATO remains open to meaningful dialogue.

We continue to work towards the next meeting of the NATO-Russia Council.

And our Supreme Commander for Europe, General Scaparrotti, met with the Russian Chief of Defence General Gerasimov last week.

They discussed military posture and exercises.

And how to increase predictability and transparency.

During the second session, we will discuss the situation in the Middle East and North Africa.

I expect that Ministers will address the situation in Syria, the Iran nuclear deal, as well as NATO's plans to scale up training in Iraq.

We will be joined by the EU High Representative / Vice President Federica Mogherini.

Together we will discuss how NATO and the European Union could cooperate more closely to build stability.

We have seen too often how turmoil in this region can inspire terrorist attacks on our own soil.

And drive desperate refugees and migrants to our shores.

That is why NATO is stepping up efforts to train local forces to fight terrorism and keep their countries stable.

Last month, I saw for myself the valuable training work that our Alliance does in both Jordan and Iraq.

Building on these efforts, we will launch a new training mission for Iraq at our Summit in July.

Ministers will agree further details on the mission tomorrow.

We are currently planning for a training mission of several hundred.

They will train Iraqi instructors, and help build Iraqi military schools.

So that our expertise can reach thousands of others and help prevent the re-emergence of ISIS.

We will also discuss possible further support for Jordan and Tunisia.

Because stability in the region is vital for our own security.

We will also address Afghanistan.

We will focus on the prospects for peace and reconciliation.

We welcome President Ghani's unprecedented offer of peace talks to the Taliban.

NATO has helped to create the environment for this to happen, with our practical and political support.

And we have renewed our commitment, including with significant troop increases and financial support.

We will close the Ministerial with a meeting on the Western Balkans and NATO's Open Door policy.

NATO remains committed to the vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace.

We will discuss the progress made by

Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia1, and Georgia.

Ukraine has also expressed its aspirations for membership.

And I expect ministers will want to address that too.

This will be our last meeting in this building − NATO's headquarters for the past 50 years.

Since we have been here we have grown from an Alliance of 15 to 29.

When Allied Defence Ministers meet in June, we will gather in our new headquarters.

I want to thank Belgium for being our hosts and for all their support in creating our new headquarters across the road.

It is a new home for a modern and forward-looking Alliance.

And with that, I'm ready to take your questions.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: And I would be grateful if you could say your name and outlet. We'll start with the Wall Street Journal in the third row.

Question [Wall Street Journal]: Julian Barnes with the Wall Street Journal. Mr Secretary General, we've got some talks between North and South Korea and potential upcoming talks between the United States and North Korea. I wonder what your view of this is. Do you view the offers from North Korea about halting testing as legitimate, something that can be counted on? Should we view any proposal to reduce the US presence in the Korean peninsular as destabilising? What's your view of that?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I visited the region last fall and I really sensed the tension in the region, especially when I visited the demilitarised zone. Therefore, I welcome the inter-Korean Summit, I think that’s very encouraging and I think it is a first important step towards a negotiated peaceful solution to the crisis on the Korean peninsular.

I also welcome the announcement by North Korea to stop testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and I think it is important that we continue to support all efforts to find a political solution. I think that one of the reasons why we see the progress we have seen over the last weeks is because there has been strong pressure put on… or there has been strong pressure on North Korea, not least by the sanctions that the UN has adopted. And I welcome both that the UN has been able to agree on stricter sanctions on North Korea, but also that we have seen that they have been implemented to a higher degree than before.

Until we see concrete changes in North Korea's actions, we must continue to put pressure on North Korea and to continue with the sanctions.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: We'll go to the second row. Gentleman there with glasses.

Question: [Kommersant Daily Newspaper]: Hungary once again blocked Ukraine-NATO Commission because of a newly adapted education law. What has to be done in order to resolve this conflict? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Hungary is a valued NATO Ally which contributes to NATO's collective defence in many different ways, and we are grateful for that. Ukraine is a close partner, and for NATO it is important to continue to provide strong political and practical support to Ukraine, not least because the aggressive action by Russia against Ukraine, illegally annexing Crimea and destabilising eastern Ukraine, is one of the main reasons why NATO, since 2014, has implemented the biggest reinforcement to our collective defence. So, Ukraine is an important partner for NATO.

It is correct that we have not been able to convene NATO-Ukraine Commission meetings at the ministerial level, because Hungary is blocking that because they disagree with Ukraine on the question of a language law. It is for Ukraine and Hungary to solve their disagreements

about the rights for minorities and I count on them to solve these disagreements quickly. We have been able to convene meetings in the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the ambassadorial level, but there is strong support in the Alliance to also convene a NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting at the ministerial level, and therefore it is important to see that Hungary and Ukraine is able to solve this disagreement as soon as possible.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK. Agence France-Presse in the third row?

Question [Agence France-Presse]: Hi, Damon Wake from AFP, Agence France-Presse. On Iraq, how do you foresee the… how do you foresee overcoming some of the forced generation issues that have been associated with the Afghan mission? You know, avoid them being repeated in Iraq? And on Afghanistan, given the two elections they have coming up, the parliamentary later this year and the presidential next year, could there be any role for NATO in providing security for these elections? Or is that something that you would rule out at this stage? Thanks.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: You asked me about the elections in Afghanistan or in Iraq?

Question [Agency France-Presse]: Afghanistan.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: In Afghanistan. Well, we provide strong support to the Afghan national security forces and they are responsible for security in Afghanistan themselves. And I think actually that's one of the great achievements we have been able to make in Afghanistan, is that not so many years ago NATO was responsible for countering the Taliban when they attacked, the different terrorist groups, and then in 2015 we were able to hand over responsibility for security in Afghanistan to the Afghans themselves. So, our main contribution, also to make sure that the elections can be held in a safe and secure way, is to continue to provide support to the Afghan security forces, with training, with advice and also with funding. Having said that, I also envisage a limited role for NATO forces to help, to make sure that the elections can be held in a safe way.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we go to the front row here?

Question: [Kurdistan 24]: Secretary General, you have been visit Iraq just one month ago and, as you know, there are many international ally in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, and your ally training Peshmerga forces. Why you don't have any training in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: So, many NATO Allies provide training for the Peshmerga in Erbil and this is something which shows that many NATO Allies are very committed to provide the training and support. The training mission NATO is now planning to launch, and to scale up our training in Iraq, that's about training the Iraqi forces. Whether we will go further later on, it's too early to say. We will start with the training mission and the

current assumption is in the range of some hundreds. But I think it's important to understand that what we will do is to train the trainers, is to help Iraq help themselves, or Iraqis help themselves. So, we will help build military schools and train Iraqi instructors, so they can train thousands. This is about building the capacity of Iraq to train their own soldiers.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Mitra TV, first row?

Question [Mitra TV]: Mr Secretary General, you just mentioned about Afghanistan and about the peace and reconciliation process, but the Taliban just launched their spring offensives, they announced it yesterday. Are we expecting… shall we be expecting any new decisions in this meeting on Afghanistan, in this regard? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: First, I would like highlight how strongly NATO Allies and NATO welcome the peace initiative by President Ghani. He has invited Taliban, without conditions, to sit down at the negotiating table and to find a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. I think we all should welcome that because there is only a political negotiated solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. At the same time, I think it's important to understand that there is a close link between what can happen around a negotiating table and what is happening on the battlefield, because that’s the reason why NATO continues to provide military support, both political but also military support, to Afghanistan. Because Taliban has to understand that they will never win at the battlefield. We will continue to train, to advise and support the Afghan national security forces, and that will create the framework, the conditions for the Taliban to, at some stage, sit down and negotiate for a peaceful solution.

Afghanistan will be an important issue at the Summit in July. There will be a meeting of the Resolute Support partners, meaning the 39 partners in the Resolute Support mission, with also Afghanistan present, and I expect the heads of states and government to reconfirm their strong commitment and support to Afghanistan, including the training and assisting, advising the Afghan forces, and also addressing the issue of funding for them, which is of course of great importance.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: NPR, Deutsche Welle, in the fourth row?

Question [NPR & Deutsche Welle]: Hi, Teri Schultz with NPR and Deutsche Welle. Thanks. How would you characterise the sort of… sort of feeling of discussion now with the Russians? You've had the Gerasimov-Scaparrotti meeting, but you've also had the Skripal poisoning, the Syrian bombing and the kicking out of diplomats. And what are the possibilities of having an NRC before the Summit?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: We are working for a new meeting of the NATO-Russia Council. We continue to strive for a meaningful dialogue with Russia and we believe that, especially when times are difficult, especially when tensions are high, as they are now in light of the Skripal case, the attack in Salisbury, the repeated examples we have seen of

Russian attempts to interfere in domestic political processes, cyber-attacks, and also the continued destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, support for the Assad regime. All of that has created a situation where tensions are higher and the relationship between NATO and Russia is more difficult than it has been for many years.

But that's not an argument against dialogue, that's actually an argument in favour of dialogue, partly to continue to strive for a better relationship, but even without any… how shall I say… improvement in the relationship, it is important to manage the relationship we have with Russia because we need to manage a situation where we have more military presence, more exercises, and to prevent incidents and accidents. And that's exactly also why it is important that our Supreme Allied Commander for Europe and General Gerasimov met, and they addressed issues like, for instance, military posture and exercises. So, we will continue to work for dialogue and military lines of communications is part of that.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Jane's?

Question [NPR & Deutsche Welle]: NRC before the Summit?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: As I said, we are working a new… no date is fixed, but we are working for a new meeting.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Jane's, in the fourth row?

Question [Jane's Defence]: Yes, Brooks Tigner, Jane's Defence. The Vice- Speaker of Ukraine's Rada just a couple of days ago here, said effectively that Minsk talks are dead and that diplomacy with Russia with serve nothing regarding the Donbass and importantly, that the only way to reassert Ukraine's full sovereignty is to erect the strongest possible army for the country. Two questions for you: do you agree with those assessments? And secondly, is there anything NATO should do to shore up the Ukrainian army, beyond the trust funds it already has, don't want to talk about that. And… such as a training mission or… in Ukraine, or pressuring the Allies to step up their bilateral military aid to the country? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: NATO Allies provide strong support to Ukraine and partly they do that through NATO and NATO activities, and we have a substantial cooperation with Ukraine, two different programmes, two different trust funds, we help them with command control, with logistics, with cyber-defences, and not least we help them to implement reforms, to strengthen their security and military institutions, and also to fight corruption. All of this is extremely important if Ukraine is going to succeed in modernising and strengthening their armed forces.

Then NATO Allies also provide support bilaterally and I welcome that. When I travel to different NATO capitals, I urge them to continue to provide and also to strengthen their support for Ukraine, both through bilateral efforts and also in the NATO framework. So, NATO Allies will continue and we will look for ways to increase our support, and I think for Ukraine

it's not so extremely important whether this support is done in the NATO framework or by NATO Allies on the bilateral level. The important thing is that the support is there and we will continue to urge NATO Allies to provide more support.

Question [Jane's Defence]: Do you agree with her assessment that Minsk is dead?

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: I agree that we have seen a lack of implementation, but I also think that Minsk is the only platform we have to try to find a peaceful, negotiated solution, so we need to continue to work for a peaceful, negotiated solution, and not least the implementation of that, at the same time as we provide support to Ukraine. And we will continue to do both.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: All the way to the back. Financial Times.

Question [Financial Times]: Thank you. Michael Peel, Financial Times. Iran is obviously very much in the news at the moment. What is the NATO position on the Iran nuclear deal? Is it helpful or not? And also, as ballistic missiles are also a big topic of discussion, what is the position in NATO on Iran's missile programme? What concerns does it have, given that both the debate over the missiles and the nuclear programme could affect NATO operations in the surrounding region, and indeed in the case of missiles, possibly even NATO member states? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: So, NATO welcomed the Iran nuclear deal when it was agreed in 2015. At the same time, we underline the importance of full implementation of the deal and we welcomed the deal back in 2015 because it helps to move Iran further away from developing nuclear weapons. And this is of course important for the security of NATO Allies, because nuclear weapons in Iran, combined with ballistic missiles, would be a direct threat to NATO Allies. At the same time, it's obvious that no deal can be good without being fully respected and fully implemented. And it is also clear that there are other issues which are not covered by the deal, for instance Iran's ballistic missile programme, which is a cause for great concern, and also the efforts of Iran to destabilise the region, support to different terrorist groups and also the threat to the freedom of maritime navigation. So, we are concerned both about the Iranian missile programme, but also other activities of Iran in the region.

NATO is in the process of gradually strengthening our missile defences. I visited a site in Romania when we inaugurated that. We are working on a new site in Poland. We have a radar in Turkey. We have ships, Aegis ships in Rota. So we have, step by step, continued to strengthen our missile defences. So, that's also part of the response to the threat of ballistic missiles.

Question [Financial Times]: Given… sorry, just a quick follow up, given what you've said, do you think the US demand for a supplemental agreement …[inaudible] and the threat to withdraw from the agreement if that isn't forthcoming, is … [inaudible]?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I think it's important to address those concerns which are not covered by the deal. For instance, the missile programme. And this has created great concern among NATO Allies and I welcome all efforts to address the Iranian missile programme. And I think it's also important to address other activities by Iran, for instance their destabilising activities, and their support for extremist groups. So, these are elements, these are challenges, threats which are not covered by the Iran nuclear deal. We welcome the nuclear deal because it helps to move Iran further away from developing nuclear weapons, but at the same time, no deal will be effective, no deal will be good, if it's not fully implemented.

Question [Financial Times]: But it is being implemented, isn't it?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, that's not for NATO to assess. We have the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the agency that is assessing that. Because NATO is not directly part of the deal, so we welcome the deal and we agree that it is important to address also other threats, like for instance, the missile programme.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Question in the front row?

Question: Pobjeda Daily. In one of your recently statement, you said that you are too focused on Syria, Iraq, that you forgot the Western Balkan countries. And you added that there are some developments here which are really going in the wrong direction. Which developments and which wrong direction you had in mind? And how NATO member countries from region can prevent these wrong directions?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: My message is that it is important of course to be focused on the threats that emanate from, for instance, the Middle East, Syria and Iraq, but it is important to do that and at the same time not forget about the challenges which we see even closer to NATO territory, in the Western Balkans. Actually, both Iraq and Syria and Western Balkans are close to NATO, because Iraq and Syria is bordering a NATO Ally, Turkey, and the Western Balkans are bordering several NATO Allies. So, I'm only saying that we need to do both things at the same time. They are two very different regions, but we have to stay focused on both of them.

The Western Balkan is at the heart of Europe and NATO has a history there, we helped to end two wars there in the 1990s, and NATO still has a presence in the Western Balkans. We have a presence in Kosovo with our KFOR mission there, several thousand soldiers. We have headquarters presence in Skopje and in Sarajevo. We help partners with reforms, with capacity-building, and of course we also have several members in the Western Balkans. The latest member of the Alliance, Montenegro, is from the region. We have also partners, like for instance Serbia, and we have two aspirant countries, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[1] and Bosnia and Herzegovina. So, NATO has a lot of partners, members, activities, in the Western Balkans. We continue to work with them to prevent any escalation of tensions because we have seen before how dangerous that can be. And we work with our

members and we work with our partners to help to avoid any escalation of the tensions in the region.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we go to the second row.

Question [Macedonian News Agency]: Secretary General, the Russian Ambassador twice has said - in Macedonia - that if the country becomes a NATO member, it will - and I'm quoting here - it becomes a legitimate target for Russia in case of conflict with NATO countries. So, I would really like your comment on this. And secondly, have you been briefed recently on the state of play with the negotiations on the name issue with Greece? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: First, I think it is extremely important to underline the right of any nation to decide its own path. This is a fundamental… including what kind of security arrangements it wants to be part of, and this is a fundamental principle which is important for NATO, but also Russia has subscribed to that, for instance in different international documents/agreements, starting with the Helsinki Final Act back in '74 and since then, also in other documents. So, I think for Skopje to decide its own path, it's for them to decide and whether it joins NATO or not, is for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[1] and 29 NATO Allies to decide. No-one else has the right to veto or to have a say in that process. The whole idea that Russia will not accept that some other countries join NATO, is in a way an expression of the idea to establish some spheres of influence, where big powers control small neighbours. And that is contradicting everything NATO believes in and that’s the independent and sovereign right of all nations to decide their own path.

When it comes to the name issue, that was one issue I discussed when I met with Prime Minister Zoran Zaev in Skopje not so many weeks ago. We had good discussions on that. I also spoke with Prime Minister Tsipras and I welcome and I hope that the dialogue, which is now taking place between Athens and Skopje, can lead to a solution, a mutual acceptable solution to the name issue. Because then we are ready to invite the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[1] to become a member of the Alliance. We agreed that back in 2008, and that decision still stands.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, gentleman in the first row here. In the first row, please.

Question: [Romanian Media]: Mr Secretary General, given the fact that this will be the last Foreign Ministerial meeting before the NATO Summit in July, what decision should be expected for the deterrence, the entire Eastern Flank of the Alliance? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: NATO has significantly strengthened our deterrence and defence since 2014, with enhanced forward presence in the Baltic countries and Poland. We’ve also increased military presence in the south east of the Alliance, in the Black Sea region. We have increased our readiness, our ability to reinforce, if needed. And

we have strengthened capabilities as cyber-defence, but also our maritime posture, air policing, and we are doing many different things to continue to provide credible deterrence and defence. We will of course continue to assess what more is needed and I expect that heads of state and government will look into the need to further strengthen our capabilities when it comes to reinforcements, to be able to reinforce, to deploy forces quickly if needed. And that includes also the issue of military mobility throughout Europe, but also to be able to deliver supplies, equipment, move forces, across the North Atlantic. What kind of decisions I think is a bit too early to announce, but these are the issues we will look into - reinforcements and military mobility.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we have the gentleman in the second row.

Question [TRT News]: TRT News from Turkey. Mr Secretary General, some NATO members criticised Turkey for purchasing S400 air defence system from Russia, although we didn't see the similar reaction when Greece bought S300s from Russia in 1990s. What is the reason for that and will NATO provide other air defence system to Turkey in the future? Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: It's a national decision what kind of military capabilities different NATO Allies acquire. At the same time, we have seen that some Allies have expressed concerns and also we have seen that recently from the United States. Therefore, I welcome that there is now direct contact between the United States and Turkey on this issue. It was also an issue that I discussed with President Erdoğan when I visited Ankara recently. And I also welcome the fact that Turkey is now in dialogue both with the United States, to look into the possibility of acquiring a US system, Patriot batteries, but also that they have agreed to work with the Italian-French group, Eurosam, to see if that's a possibility to deliver a air defence system from Italy and France. So, I welcome these efforts to also look into the possibility of acquiring air defence systems from NATO Allies.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Lady over there. Third row. Third row.

Question [Kvilis Palitra]: Thank you. Mr Secretary General, what you can say about Georgia's perspectives? And do you think that Georgia needs more support from NATO? Because even Russian propaganda and military activities is getting more and more aggressive in my country.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, Georgia is a very close partner of NATO and we have many different activities. We provide practical and political support to Georgia and we also welcome that Georgia is making progress towards membership and I'm certain that the Summit will recognise this progress. We also welcome the fact that we have many different tools to strengthen our partnership. We have the Joint Training and Evaluation Centre. We have NATO support for different other educational efforts by Georgia, to strengthen and to improve the quality of their armed forces. We help them with implementing reforms. So, there is a lot of NATO presence in… and there are several exercises. But I would also like to stress that NATO is very… appreciates strongly also that Georgia is

contributing to NATO missions and operations, so this is not only NATO providing support to Georgia, but also very much that Georgia provides a lot of support to NATO, not least by being one of the nations providing the highest number of forces to our Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, we have Agence France-Presse at the very back. No, on the other side.

Question [Interpreted]: Sorry, I'm going to ask this question in French. I would like to come back to the issue of Iran. You seem to have taken the position the United States want to undermine this agreement with Iran, but European Allies believe that this agreement is fine and that the facilities have been certified by the IAEA. Don't you think that tomorrow there's going to be a significant divergence between different Allies, especially if Mr Pompeo is going to represent the United States tomorrow?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Well, it's too early to say exactly who will represent the United States because it remains to be seen how far they will come when it comes to the confirmation in the Senate. But I look forward to welcome the representative of the United States, regardless of whether it's the new Secretary of State or whether it's someone else. The beginning of the question was about Iran. The challenge there is that, of course, we are concerned about different activities which we see Iran is responsible for, including their ballistic missile programme, their support for extremist groups, and also their efforts to destabilise countries in the region. And that's exactly why I expect NATO ministers, foreign ministers, to address the issue of the Iran nuclear deal and that that will be a topic that will be addressed and discussed during the Foreign Ministerial meeting that starts tomorrow. I think it's a bit too early to report from the discussion because the meeting will take place tomorrow, but this is an issue which is important for all NATO Allies because it affects our security.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: OK, gentleman in the front row?

Question: Mr Secretary General, first question is does NATO have any plans to enhance the presence of Allied forces in the Baltic countries, maybe in the future? And what is the NATO position on the dealing of so-called Russian threat in the Baltic region?

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: NATO has increased significantly our presence in the Baltic region. For the first time, NATO has troops in the region, with four battlegroups in the three Baltic countries and in Poland. We also have air policing and we have more maritime presence in the Baltic Sea. And this sends a clear message to any potential adversary because these forces - the battlegroups we have in the Baltic countries and Poland - they are multinational. They are led by the United States, by the United Kingdom, by Germany and by Canada and there are many other NATO Allies providing troops. So, the importance of the presence of the NATO battlegroups in the Baltic region is partly of course the size, the quality of these troops, but also the message they send by being multinational,

sending a clear message that NATO is there and that any aggression against any of these countries will trigger a response from the whole NATO Alliance. Therefore, our focus now is on how to be sure that we can continue to reinforce, if needed, these countries. And that's exactly what we are working on, both when it comes to what we call military mobility, be able to reinforce, to enable our forces and the territory we are responsible for, and also to actually bring forces across the Atlantic if there is a real need for strengthening NATO's military presence in Europe. This is on the agenda, we are working on it. I think it's too early to announce any specific decisions, but the issue of reinforcement is high on the NATO agenda.

Oana Lungescu [NATO Spokesperson]: Thank you very much. This concludes this press conference. Looking forward to seeing you all tomorrow. Thank you.

Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: Thank you.

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the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine,
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Enhanced our cyber defences;
Stepped up our efforts to counter hybrid activities;
And Allies are investing more in defence.

Question [NPR & Deutsche Welle]: Hi, Teri Schultz with NPR and Deutsche Welle. Thanks. How would you characterise the sort of… sort of feeling of discussion now with the Russians? You've had the Gerasimov-Scaparrotti meeting, but you've also had the Skripal poisoning, the Syrian bombing and the kicking out of diplomats. And what are the possibilities of having an NRC before the Summit?

Question [NPR & Deutsche Welle]: NRC before the Summit?

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