



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

# NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING, 17-18 JUNE 2020

## Policy Brief

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**NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING, 17-18 JUNE 2020:**  
**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Agenda

- **Deterrence and defence**, incl. the **response to Russia's new missiles**
- NATO missions and operations, esp. **Afghanistan** and **Iraq**
- Preparations for a possible **second COVID-19 wave**
- Update of guidelines for **national resilience**

Decisions on

- **A balanced political and military package** in response to Russia's growing nuclear capabilities
- **COVID-19 response**: a) **new operational plan**, b) **stockpile of medical equipment**, and c) **fund for the acquisition of critical medical supplies and services**
- **Updated baseline requirements for national resilience**

Other discussion themes

- **China's rise and the need for Beijing to engage in arms control**
- **Reflection Process on NATO 2030**
- **Announced US troop reduction in Germany**
- **The situation in Libya**

Partner Participation

- **Australia** (for the first time), **Finland**, and **Sweden**
- **EU High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell Fontelles**

**I. DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE, INCL. THE RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S NEW MISSILES**

**DECISIONS**

- Ministers agreed on:
  - a **balanced package of political and military elements** in response to Russia's growing suite of nuclear capable missiles, notably by:
    - strengthening **NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence**;
    - the acquisition of **new air and missile defence systems** by some Allies;
    - investments into **advanced conventional capabilities**, incl. 5th generation fighter aircraft;
    - adaptation of **intelligence** processes;
    - adaptation of **exercises**; and
    - additional steps to **maintain a safe, secure, and effective NATO nuclear deterrent**.

**BACKGROUND**

- Russia's **growing arsenal of nuclear-capable missiles** and **irresponsible nuclear rhetoric** have security implications for the Alliance.
- Russia deployed **SSC-8 missiles**, which led to the demise of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. These missiles are dual-capable, mobile, and hard to detect; can reach European cities with little warning; and lower the nuclear threshold.
- Russia modernises its **intercontinental ballistic missiles**; deployed the first **Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles**; tested the **Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missile system**; and develops the **SSC-X-9-Skyfall nuclear-powered cruise missile**.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

- NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg made clear that “*We will maintain our deterrence and defence but we will not mirror Russia. We have no intention to deploy new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe.*” Moreover, “*A new arms race would benefit nobody.*”
- Ministers also met in the **Nuclear Planning Group** (which includes all Allies regardless of their nuclear status – except for France upon its own wishes). The NATO Secretary General stressed that “***NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements have served us well for decades. Allowing us to forge common ground on nuclear issues. The NATO nuclear deterrent in Europe remains vital for peace and freedom in Europe.***”
- Ministers also discussed **effective arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation**, to which NATO remains strongly committed. The United States is keeping Allies informed of US-Russia discussions on extending new START. Allies also urge China to engage in arms control (see below).

## II. NATO PREPARATIONS FOR A POSSIBLE SECOND COVID-19 WAVE

### DECISIONS

- Ministers agreed on:
  - a **new operational plan** for a COVID-19 second wave;
  - a **stockpile of medical equipment** for immediate assistance to Allies and partners; and
  - a **fund for the acquisition of critical medical supplies and services.**

### BACKGROUND

- Since the beginning, NATO and Allied armed forces have played a key role in supporting civilian efforts
  - With some **350 flights** airlifting hundreds of tons of critical supplies around the world;
  - Almost **100 field hospitals**;
  - And more than **half a million of troops** have supported the civilian response.
- Allies are now preparing for **future health crises**.
- For more information and concrete examples of bilateral and NATO assistance to Allies, see the NATO factsheet [NATO’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

### ADDITIONAL NOTES

- In a sign of Allied unity and solidarity, many Allies already **offered to donate medical equipment** to the stockpile and to **contribute to the acquisition fund**.
- Allies remain committed to **help each other and partners** and to **work together with other international actors**, notably the European Union

## III. UPDATE OF NATIONAL RESILIENCE GUIDELINES

### DECISIONS

- Ministers agreed on:
  - updated **baseline requirements for national resilience** (see below) to better account for
    - **cyber threats**;
    - risks to **security of supply chains**, and
    - negative consequences of **foreign ownership and control**.

## BACKGROUND

### THE SEVEN BASELINE REQUIREMENTS FOR CIVIL PREPAREDNESS

1. **Assured continuity of government and critical government services:** for instance the ability to make decisions, communicate them and enforce them in a crisis;
2. **Resilient energy supplies:** back-up plans and power grids, internally and across borders;
3. **Ability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people,** and to de-conflict these movements from NATO's military deployments;
4. **Resilient food and water resources:** ensuring these supplies are safe from disruption or sabotage;
5. **Ability to deal with mass casualties:** ensuring that civilian health systems can cope and that sufficient medical supplies are stocked and secure;
6. **Resilient civil communications systems:** ensuring that telecommunications and cyber networks function even under crisis conditions, with sufficient back-up capacity.  
(*This requirement was updated in November 2019 by NATO Defence Ministers, who stressed the need for reliable communications systems including 5G, robust options to restore these systems, priority access to national authorities in times of crisis, and the thorough assessments of all risks to communications systems.*); and
7. **Resilient transport systems:** ensuring that NATO forces can move across Alliance territory rapidly and that civilian services can rely on transportation networks, even in a crisis.

(agreed by Allied Heads of State and Government at the Warsaw Summit in 2016)

For more information on these, see NATO's dedicated webpage: [Resilience and Article 3](#)

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Asked about **discussions on 5G**, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated: *“resilience, the protection of our infrastructure, the concerns about foreign ownership and foreign control, is on the NATO agenda” [...] We don't mention specific countries or specific companies, but when we now recently updated one of the other baseline requirements on telecommunications, we were very specific about what kind of concerns, what kind of threats Allies should take into account, analyse and make risk assessments about before they make decisions on, for instance, 5G.”*

## IV. NATO MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS, ESP. AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

### DISCUSSIONS

- Ministers discussed NATO missions and operations, notably in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have received COVID-19 assistance after requests made through NATO.
- **Afghanistan:**
  - Ministers reiterated a **strong commitment to Afghanistan's long-term security**, which is vital for progress in the peace process.
  - Allies are **adjusting their presence** in Afghanistan and **will consider further adjustments** in close coordination among Allies.
  - The NATO Secretary General underlined that *“The Taliban have to live up to their commitments [reduce violence and break all bonds with Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups], take part in intra-Afghan negotiations and make real compromises for lasting peace.”*
- **Iraq:**
  - NATO and the Allies remain **committed to working with Iraq in the fight against international terrorism**, incl. to ensure Daesh does not return.
  - Ministers reiterated their **commitment to stepping up their efforts** in full consultation with the Iraqi government and the Global Coalition.

## V. OTHER DISCUSSION THEMES

- **China's rise and the need for Beijing to engage in arms control**
  - Ministers discussed **China's developing military capabilities and the need for China to engage in arms control.**
  - Allies expressed concern about **China's heavy investments in new, modern military capabilities**, including new nuclear warheads and new delivery systems on land, at sea, in the air. For instance, according to the NATO Secretary General, over the last five years China has added 80 more ships and submarines to their navy – equivalent to the total amount of ships and submarines in the navy of the United Kingdom.
  - NATO's growing attention to China is not about *"moving into the South China Sea, but about the fact that **China's coming closer to us.** We see them in the Arctic. We see them in Africa. We see them investing heavily in infrastructure in our own countries. And, of course, we see them also in cyberspace."*
  - NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg argued *"As a major military power, **China also has major responsibilities.** So as a rising global power, it is **high time for China to participate in global arms control.**"*
  - NATO's approach to China will be one of the themes in **the reflection process.**
  
- **The NATO Secretary General's Reflection Process on NATO 2030**
  - The NATO Secretary General **updated the Ministers on his reflection process on NATO 2030**, which he had launched the previous week. (For more on this, see the Secretary General's speech [here](#))
  - He stressed that *NATO 2030* was *"about keeping our Alliance **strong militarily, making it stronger politically, and more global.**"*
  - Among the themes explicitly mentioned by the NATO Secretary General for the reflection process are **China** and the need to strengthen NATO's increasingly **global partnerships.**
  
- **Announced US troop reduction in Germany**
  - Ministers discussed the issue during the meeting.
  - **No final US government decision on manner and timeline of implementation.**
  - During a phone call with the US President, the NATO Secretary General's main message on the US presence in Europe was *"**it's good for Europe, but it's also good for North America and the United States, because the transatlantic bond is essential to the strength and the success of the Alliance.**"*
  - The NATO Secretary General stressed that *"over the last years is actually that **the United States has increased their presence throughout Europe and also in other countries, including in the Baltic countries, in Poland, in the Black Sea Region. We have more US exercises**"*.
  - The NATO Secretary General welcomed the **clarity of US Secretary of Defence** on the US commitment and consultations with Allies on the way forward.
  - On **burden sharing**, the NATO Secretary General noted that Allied defence budgets had increased by 130 billion USD since 2016. But there was still a way to go to reach the 2% GDP target.
  - The NATO Secretary General noted **a dialogue was ongoing within NATO.**
  
- **The situation in Libya**
  - Libya was **not on the agenda, but several Allies raised the issue**, due to the security implications for the Alliance.
  - NATO strongly supports **the UN-led efforts in Libya** and the **Berlin Process**. It is also concerned about **Russia's growing presence.**
  - Asked about the **incident involving a French navy vessel** engaged in NATO's Operation Sea Guardian **and a Turkish navy vessel**, the Secretary General confirmed that NATO military authorities were investigating the incident to clarify what happened. He also reaffirmed that *"NATO, of course, supports the implementation of UN decisions, including UN arms embargoes."*

- Asked about possible NATO support to EU operation Irini – which aims to enforce the UN arms embargo in Libya, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg mentioned that talks and contacts were ongoing but **no decision was taken.**