



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING

13-14 June 2024

Policy Brief

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NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING, 13-14 JUNE 2024:
KEY TAKEAWAYS

NATO Ministers of Defence met in Brussels from 13-14 June. This was the **last meeting at the ministerial level prior to the July Summit** of Heads of State and Government in Washington, D.C. from 9-11 July. Meetings of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, the NATO-Ukraine Council in Defence Ministers' Session and the Nuclear Planning Group in Ministerial Session were also held.

Focus of the Meetings

- **Predictable and coordinated support for Ukraine, incl.**
 - NATO coordination of security assistance and training
 - long-term financial commitment
- **Allied deterrence and defence**
 - implementation of NATO's new defence plans
 - a new Defence Industrial Pledge
 - NATO Nuclear Posture and Adaptation
- **Response to Russia's hostile actions toward allies**

Decisions

- **Defence ministers endorsed:**
 - **NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine**
 - **a NATO-Ukraine Innovation Cooperation Roadmap**
 - **further steps to continue to implement NATO's new defence plans**
 - **response options against further hostile actions toward Allies by Russia**

I. PREDICTABLE AND COORDINATED SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

The NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine

- **Defence ministers agreed for NATO to lead the coordination of security assistance and training for Ukraine.**
- NATO will oversee the **training of Ukrainian forces in Allied nations; plan and coordinate donations of equipment; manage transfer and repair of equipment; and provide support to the long-term development** of Ukraine's armed forces.
- Key aims behind NATO assuming the lead include **increasing transparency and accountability** as well as **reducing risks of gaps and delays** between announcements and deliveries.
- **The NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU)** effort will be launched at the NATO Summit in Washington, D.C. It will come **under the NATO Command Structure** and draw on **NATO Common Funding**.
- **A 3-Star General will lead a new NATO command** at an existing US facility in Wiesbaden, Germany, and **logistical nodes in the Alliance's Eastern part**. The Commander will report directly to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). Almost **700 Allied and partner personnel** are expected to be part of this effort.
- NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg made clear that NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine "do[es] not make NATO a party to the conflict, but they will enhance our support to Ukraine to uphold its right to self-defence."

Long-term financial commitment

- **Ministers discussed a long-term financial pledge for Ukraine**, aimed at sustaining military support levels for Ukraine (Allies currently provide more than 99% of the military aid to Ukraine).
- The Secretary General has argued that **the level of support provided by Allies since Russia's renewed invasion should be maintained, namely an annual support of EUR 40 billion per year for as long as it takes**.
- According to the Secretary General's proposal, **Allies would contribute according to the balance of their respective GDPs**. As the United States equals roughly 50 percent of NATO Allies' total GDP, it would provide half, with the rest divided among all other Allies accordingly.
- **NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg expressed his confidence** that the long-term financial pledge would be approved "[b]ecause a credible long-term commitment shows Moscow that they cannot wait us out."
- Ahead of the meeting, the Secretary General met Hungary's Prime Minister. The Secretary General noted that "Hungary will not send the personnel to these activities [under NATO Security and Assistance for Ukraine] and not contribute to the NATO [financial] pledge". However, he also noted that Hungary "will adhere to older NATO obligations," "continue to finance the NATO common budget according to the agreed cost shares" and "not block any decision by other NATO Allies on taking on the lead of the provision of training and security assistance and not block and a decision on a financial pledge".

Further steps on Ukraine's path to NATO membership

- In addition to Allied pledges for immediate military assistance, NSATU and the NATO financial pledge, the Secretary General noted that he expected the fourth deliverable for the NATO Washington Summit “to ensure that we move Ukraine closer to membership”. “That's part an issue of language, which is now negotiated”, he noted, “but also of course, everything we do interoperability moving Ukraine, closer to NATO, when it comes to integration will help them also to sooner, faster, quicker, become a NATO Ally.”
- When asked, the Secretary General noted that he expects strong language on membership coming out of the Summit: “It's not for me to go into the details on the exact wording but **I expect that that language will be even clearer in our commitment that Ukraine will become a member of the alliance.**”

NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre (JATEC)

- **Ministers are also on the path to endorse the NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre (JATEC) in Bydgoszcz, Poland**, as the first joint institution between NATO and Ukraine. JATEC will allow the sharing of lessons learned from Russia's war and for Ukrainian forces to learn and train alongside Allied counterparts.

NATO-Ukraine Innovation Cooperation Roadmap

- **Defence ministers endorsed** the first-ever **NATO-Ukraine Innovation Cooperation Roadmap**.

II. ALLIED DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE

*[Note: A few days after the meeting, NATO released [the latest figures for Allied defence expenditures](#). **These show 23 Allies meeting the 2% target in 2024, up from three in 2014.**]*

Implementation of NATO's new defence plans

- **Defence ministers discussed and agreed on further steps** to continue to **implement NATO's “most comprehensive defence plans since the end of the Cold War”**, in the words of the NATO Secretary General.
- Importantly, **NATO's new regional defence plans** must lead to updated command and control, refined delegated authorities and ensuring all required forces and capabilities are ready for any contingency.
- As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said, “Allies are offering forces to NATO's command at a scale not seen in decades. **Today we have 500,000 troops at high readiness across all domains, significantly more than the goal that was set at the 2022 Madrid Summit.**”
- NATO has already doubled the number of battlegroups on the Eastern flank, and Allies are exercising at a higher tempo and with more complexity. 2024's Steadfast Defender included 90,000 troops across Europe.

Towards a new Defence Industrial Pledge

- **Ministers discussed** the framework for a new Defence Industrial Pledge, which Allies are expected to agree to at the Washington Summit.
- The new pledge would go a step further to **increase production rates, making procurement more agile and help Allies standardise munitions and improve interoperability.**
- A new Defence Industrial Pledge would also **signal the long-term investments needed by industry to meet demand levels.**

NATO Nuclear Posture and Adaptation

- **Ministers discussed** the ongoing adaptation of the Alliance's nuclear capabilities at a meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group.
- The Secretary General noted the recent announcement that **the Netherlands's F-35 fighter jets were declared 'ready' to support NATO's nuclear mission** and mentioned **the United States' ongoing modernisation of its nuclear weapons in Europe.**¹
- As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated, **the current nuclear environment surrounding Allies is evolving quickly and poses new challenges to Allies.** He cited **several examples:**
 - Russia's dangerous use of nuclear rhetoric, announced deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus and its increase in nuclear exercises;
 - China's robust nuclear forces modernisation effort, which is significantly increasing the size of China's strategic nuclear forces, which in turn will be able to reach NATO territory; and
 - The existing North Korean nuclear programme and the efforts by Iran to develop a nuclear military capability.
- Considering this rapidly evolving and challenging nuclear environment, Stoltenberg noted, "NATO's nuclear mission remains the same: to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression."

III. RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S HOSTILE ACTIONS TOWARD ALLIES

- **Russia's increasing number of hostile actions** against Allies were also on the meeting's agenda. These include **an intensifying campaign of sabotage, acts of violence, cyber-attacks and disinformation.**
- **Defence Ministers agreed** to a set of response options, including:
 - Increased intelligence exchanges;
 - Enhanced protection of critical infrastructure, including undersea and cyber; and,
 - Further restrictions on Russian intelligence operatives.
- The Secretary General noted that "Allies are taking decisive measures – making arrests and launching legal proceedings." He added that "[w]e will be calm and measured in how we respond to Russian provocations. At the same time, we will call out Russia's actions and impose costs."

¹ For more information on NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and forces, including its nuclear burden-sharing arrangements, please refer to the Alliance's information on the subject [here](#).

- “Russia’s campaign will not deter us from supporting Ukraine and we will continue to protect our territories and populations against any kind of hostile actions,” said Secretary General Stoltenberg.
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