



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

# Press Conference

by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Heads of State and Government during the NATO Wales Summit

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Good afternoon. I am delighted to start this press conference with an important announcement by the President of Poland.

*[Announcement by the President of Poland]*

Thank you very much indeed, Mr President, it is very fitting that Poland should host the next NATO Summit. It is a strong signal of Poland's commitment to NATO and NATO's more visible presence in the eastern part of our Alliance. So Mr President, thank you very much indeed.

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We have just agreed on a Readiness Action Plan to strengthen NATO's collective defence. This is a demonstration of our solidarity and our resolve.

The security environment we face is more unpredictable than ever. Russia is attacking Ukraine. Violent extremists are rising in the Middle East. Instability is growing in North Africa.

In these turbulent times, NATO must be prepared to undertake the full range of missions, and to defend Allies against the full range of threats. We have already taken immediate steps to enhance our defence. Today we agreed we will maintain continuous presence and activity in the air, on land and at sea in the Eastern part of the Alliance, on a rotational basis.

We already have a NATO Response Force. This is a multinational force, which brings together land, air, maritime and special operation forces. It can be deployed anywhere in the world, for collective defence or crisis management.

Today, we agreed to create what I would call a spearhead within our Response Force – a very high readiness force able to deploy at very short notice.

This spearhead will include several thousand land troops, ready to deploy within a few days with air, sea and Special Forces support.

To facilitate reinforcements, we will also establish an appropriate command and control presence in the east of Allied territory. Reception facilities. Pre-position equipment, supplies and planners. Step up intelligence sharing. Upgrade defence plans. And hold more short-notice exercises. So that we can deal swiftly and firmly with any threat.

This decision sends a clear message: NATO protects all Allies, at all times. And it sends a clear message to any potential aggressor: should you even think of attacking one Ally, you will be facing the whole Alliance.

Our Readiness Action Plan is meant to defend NATO countries. It is fully in line with our international commitments. And it will ensure that NATO remains strong, ready, robust, and responsive to meet present and future challenges from wherever they come.

Today, we also endorsed a package of 16 priorities that NATO will pursue to ensure it remains robust and ready into the future.

This includes an enhanced cyber defence. We agree that cyber attacks can reach a level that threatens the prosperity, security and stability of our countries, and the Euro-Atlantic area. They could harm our modern societies as much as a conventional attack. So today, we declare that cyber defence is part of NATO's core task of collective defence.

We also made our partnerships stronger to help build stability in the world.

Over the last 20 years, NATO forces have gone into action alongside partner nations time and again - at sea off the Horn of Africa, in the skies over Libya, on land in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

We have learned the hard way how to work together. We need to keep those skills as our largest operation in Afghanistan draws to a conclusion. So we will offer our partner

countries more opportunities to work and train with us - so that we can remain effective when we deploy and tackle security challenges together.

We have also decided to launch a Defence Capacity Building Initiative. To reinforce our commitment to partner nations. And to help the Alliance project stability without deploying large combat forces.

This builds on our extensive expertise in supporting, advising and assisting nations with defence and security reforms.

Building on our close cooperation, and following their requests, we have agreed to extend this initiative to Georgia, Moldova and Jordan. We reaffirm our readiness to provide security capacity support to Libya, when conditions permit. And we stand ready to assist Iraq, should Iraq make such a request.

Finally, there is one group of partner countries who hold a special relationship with NATO. The countries which aspire to join the Alliance, once they fill the criteria.

The Open Door policy has been a historic success for NATO. It has allowed us to move towards a Europe whole, free and at peace.

NATO's door remains open. Each country will continue to be judged on its merits. And no third country has a veto over NATO enlargement.

Each aspirant has work to do, in different areas. And we will give them the support they need.

Today, we therefore agreed on a substantive package of measures for Georgia. A substantive package that will help Georgia advance in its preparations towards membership of NATO.

And we agreed to open intensified and focused talks on Montenegro's candidacy. We will assess by the end of 2015, at the latest, whether to invite Montenegro to join the Alliance.

So, with the Readiness Action Plan, improved capability and our unique set of Partners, NATO is able to act swiftly, decisively and in concert with others.

Today we have decided how to make NATO more ready and better connected. This is the blueprint for the NATO of tomorrow.

And with that, I am ready to take your questions.

**OANA LUNGESCU (NATO Spokesperson):** We'll start with the German Press Agency (DPA) over there?

**Q:** Good afternoon, Kristian Böhmer, German Press Agency. You mentioned, Secretary General, the aggressive behaviour of Russia. I would like to know if all 28 Allies still stick to the NATO-Russia Founding Act from 1997. And could you give us, please, a

flavour of the discussion on this topic of the discussions... on this topic, yesterday, at the dinner; and today, at the NAC? Thank you very much.

**ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** Hum, in today's meeting and during our discussions, we have reaffirmed our commitment to what we call a "rules-based security architecture" in Europe. We strongly believe in that rules-based system. And there is a broad agreement on that. And we urge Russia to live up to her commitments within that rules-based security system in Europe. And we haven't taken any decision to walk away from the NATO-Russia Founding Act. We stick to the principles of that founding act; while it's clear that Russia has gravely violated the fundamental principles of that Joint NATO-Russia document.

**OANA LUNGESCU:** *Reuters.*

**Q:** Mr Secretary, in your... what has NATO agreed to do to help Iraq in its fight against Islamic State? And if I could also ask another question, is Poland happy with the Readiness Action Plan you have agreed? Or does it fall short of their expectations?

**ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** On the latter, Poland has expressed great satisfaction with the Readiness Action Plan. And all other Allies did exactly the same. There is really a very broad support for this Readiness Action Plan. We assure that this Readiness Action Plan is well suited to address the dramatically changed security environment in Europe.

On Iraq, we have actually had very thorough discussions on the situation, not only in Eastern Europe; but also to the Southeast in Syria and in Iraq. And there are two tracks of work here. One is a track pursued by a number of individual Allies that are determined to take the necessary steps to help Iraq; to stop the advance of the terrorist organization Islamic State. And I warmly welcome that. I think the international community has an obligation to do all it can to stop this dangerous terrorist organization.

The other track is the NATO track. And we have decided that if we receive a request from the Iraqi government, we are ready to consider a defence capacity building mission in Iraq.

What that will be in concrete terms remains to be seen? And of course, it will very much depend on the Iraqi request if we were to receive such an Iraqi request.

But let me remind you that until 2011 NATO had had a training mission in Iraq. So actually, we do have quite some experience in the field of defence capacity building in Iraq.

We have also decided that NATO can play a coordinating role when it comes to the coordination of efforts carried out by individual nations, for instance, coordination of an airlift.

And finally I would also mention that we have decided to enhance cooperation in exchanging information on returning foreign fighters. The issue of returning foreign

fighters is really a matter of concern, from a security point of view. And this is the reason why we have decided to enhance exchange of information.

**OANA LUNGESCU:** *BBC.*

**Q:** Jonathan Beale from *BBC*. Secretary General, could you tell us a bit more about the make-up of the Spearhead Force? Which countries are willing to host these forward-operating bases? And just a quick question afterwards on Iraq: You said your... the NATO, the Alliance is ready to assist the Iraqis. How far would that assistance go? You're just talking about training there. Or could it include, for example, if a request came, air strikes?

**ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** As you know, the Iraqi government has requested assistance from a number of individual Allies. And I welcome that the United States have taken military action to stop the advance of this terrorist organization: the Islamic State. I welcome that other Allies have contributed in different ways to help Iraq. There's been no request for NATO involvement in such military actions. So what we have focussed on, in our discussions, is this issue of defence capacity building, provided that we receive such a request from the Iraqi government.

Now, on the Spearhead Force, all the military details will be worked out after the Summit. But actually work has already started. Let me stress that implementation will start immediately. It also remains to be seen exactly where the reception facilities will be located. But so far I have noted indications from the Baltic States, from Poland, from Romania that they are willing to host such reception facilities.

**OANA LUNGESCU:** *NPR.* Lady in red over there.

**Q:** Thank you, Teri Schultz with National Public Radio and CBS News. Mister Secretary General with the new capabilities that NATO is now forming, you said they would be able to deploy anywhere in the world. Hum, and with the other issue that have sort of co-dominated the Summit, is there any way that NATO's enhanced capabilities can help in the fight against the Islamic State, not just if the government of Iraq asks for help; but right now in the threat to NATO citizens from these terrorists? Thank you.

**ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** Hum, now you mentioned threats... direct whatever... threats directed at NATO populations. I mentioned the decision to enhance exchange of information. That's one very concrete step to take. We haven't discussed a NATO involvement in direct military operations in Iraq. As I mentioned, we haven't received a request. We are aware of discussions among individual Allies. And actually, they have also used NATO as a forum for those consultations and those discussions.

And as I mentioned, I welcome such steps taken and to be taken by individual Allies. So, in short, as far as NATO is concerned, we have focussed on defence capacity building.

**OANA LUNGESCU:** *Georgian Media* over there.

**Q:** Thank you, *Georgian TV Maestro*, Sophie (inaudible). Secretary General, just was Defence Ministers' Plus Five (...inaudible...). Could you give us some more details

what's the new status for Georgia in the group of Sweden, Jordan, Finland and Australia? And also today's Ukraine into Southern Georgia has strong signals sending from NATO to Russia today... from the Summit.

**ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** On the meeting with the five partners that are interested in what we call enhanced opportunities, I can tell you that Georgia's participation in that group represents an acknowledgment of the progress Georgia has made in this relationship with NATO.

Georgia wants to further improve its ability to work and operate with NATO forces. Georgia has already made remarkable steps in that direction. But more could be done. And I'm pleased that Georgia accepted the invitation to participate in that selected group of nations that want a particular close relationship with NATO. So there is clearly a political dimension, a demonstration or acknowledgment of the progress Georgia has made. But of course there's also a very concrete dimension that Georgia's participation in that group will step up Georgia's practical military cooperation with NATO.

On...

**Q:** (Inaudible)

**ANDERS FOGH RASMUSSEN:** Oh, sorry, yes, I think the decision we have taken today to prepare a Readiness Action Plan sends a very, very clear message to Russia: that we are strongly determined to take all steps necessary to provide effective protection and defence of our Allies. And in the light of the current security situation, I find it appropriate that as a result of this Readiness Action Plan you will see more visible NATO presence in the East. I think that sends a very clear message to Moscow.

**OANA LUNGESCU:** Thank you very much!