

NATO Defence Ministers took further steps on Thursday (8 October 2015) to make the Alliance's collective defence stronger. "This sends a clear message to all NATO citizens: NATO will defend you. NATO is on the ground. NATO is ready," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.



The Ministers reviewed the implementation of the Alliance's Readiness Action Plan. The Plan, agreed by NATO leaders at their Summit in Wales last year, ensures NATO's readiness to confront challenges in an evolving and fast-moving security environment.

They gave their green light to the completed military concept for the Enhanced NATO Response Force, including its command and control arrangements. "We now have everything in place to make the Response Force stronger, faster and more capable," Mr. Stoltenberg said. The Ministers also agreed to set up two more NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) or small headquarters in Hungary and Slovakia. Six other NFIUs were activated in September in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The Secretary General also welcomed the announcement by Germany to lead the Alliance's very high readiness Spearhead Force in 2019 and plans by the United Kingdom to rotate more troops into the Baltics and Poland for training and exercises.

The Defence Ministers also held a discussion on Syria and the recent violations of Turkish airspace by Russian aircraft. The Secretary General called on Russia "to play a constructive role in the fight against ISIL," adding that NATO stands in strong solidarity with Turkey. They also discussed the security situation in Afghanistan. The Secretary General said that Allies will later this year decide on the troop levels and where they will be based. This will be done on the basis of a detailed security assessment, which is expected in the coming weeks.

## Collective defence

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The principle of collective defence is at the very heart of NATO's founding treaty. It remains a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together, committing them to protect each other and setting a spirit of solidarity within the Alliance.



### Highlights

- Collective defence means that an attack against one Ally is considered as an attack against all Allies.
- The principle of collective defence is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
- NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history after the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States.
- NATO has taken collective defence measures on several occasions, for instance in response to the situation in Syria and in the wake of the Ukraine crisis.
- NATO has standing forces on active duty that contribute to the Alliance's collective defence efforts on a permanent basis.

This principle is enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack on one Ally shall be considered an attack on all Allies.

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The principle of collective defence has also been raised in the context of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Russia's actions have raised justified concerns

among its neighbours, including those who are NATO members. That is why NATO Foreign Ministers, on 1 April, directed Allied military authorities to develop extra measures to strengthen collective defence.

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- [A cornerstone of the Alliance](#)
  - [Invocation of Article 5](#)
  - [Enhanced collective defence measures in wake of Ukraine crisis](#)
  - [Standing forces](#)
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## The Readiness Action Plan

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At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO agreed a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to ensure the Alliance is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. This is the most significant reinforcement of NATO's collective defence since the end of the Cold War. The RAP addresses risks and threats from the east and the south.

### Highlights

- Due to the changed security environment on NATO's borders, the RAP includes 'assurance measures' for NATO member countries in Central and Eastern Europe to reassure their populations, reinforce their defence and deter potential aggression.
- Assurance measures comprise a series of land, sea and air activities in, on and around the NATO's eastern flank, which are reinforced by exercises focused on collective defence and crisis management.
- The RAP also includes 'adaptation measures' which are longer-term changes to NATO's forces and command structure so that the Alliance will be better able to react swiftly and decisively to sudden crises.
- Adaptation measures include tripling the strength of the NATO Response Force (NRF), creating a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) that is able to deploy at very short notice, and enhancing the Standing Naval Forces.
- To facilitate readiness and the rapid deployment of forces, six NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) - which are small headquarters - are being established in Central and Eastern Europe, along with a headquarters for the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, Poland, and a standing joint logistics support group headquarters.

### More background information

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- **Assurance Measures**
  - **Adaptation Measures**
  - **Evolution**