



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING

12-13 October 2022

Policy Brief

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NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING,
12-13 OCTOBER 2022:
KEY TAKEAWAYS

The most recent meeting of NATO Defence Ministers took place at NATO HQ in Brussels on Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 October.

Key items for discussion:

- **stepping up support for Ukraine;**
- **strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence** with the necessary forces, capabilities, and stockpiles;
- **protecting critical infrastructure**, with more presence, resilience, and intelligence sharing; and
- **reviewing NATO's ongoing operations and missions.**

Other initiatives:

- Defence Ministers from 14 NATO Allies and Finland signed a Letter of Intent on a **"European Sky Shield Initiative"** to create a European air and missile defence system.
- NATO Defence Ministers agreed to establish a **Review Board to govern the responsible development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data** across the NATO Enterprise.

I. ALLIED AND NATO SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

- Further support for Ukraine was the main theme on the first day of the Ministerial, starting with a **meeting of the 50+ nations of the US-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group**, followed by a working dinner at which the NATO Ministers were joined by their colleagues from NATO Invitees Finland and Sweden as well as by Ukrainian Defence Minister Reznikov.
- Against the background of continuing Russian missile strikes in Ukraine, there was broad agreement on the need to **continue to support Kyiv, especially with air defence capabilities**. Following an earlier US announcement, several other Allies, including Canada, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, pledged to supply different kinds of missiles, drones and radars, including to support Ukraine's information gathering and logistics capabilities.
- It was also confirmed that, as part of **NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package**, Ukraine was already receiving fuel, winter clothing and medical supplies, and would soon be receiving counter-drone equipment. Speaking after the meetings, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said "we're going to do everything we can to make sure that they [the Ukrainians] have what's required to be effective".
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II. NATO DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE

- A further meeting of Allied Defence Ministers plus Invitees Finland and Sweden focused on NATO's deterrence and defence and the implications of Russia's war in Ukraine for Allied security. It was confirmed that Allies would **continue to increase the number of high readiness forces** and that the eight NATO battlegroups across the eastern part of the Alliance could be quickly scaled up to brigade size.

- The NATO Secretary General recognised that Allies' assistance to Ukraine had had an impact on their own levels of **stockpiles of munitions and equipment**. Ministers therefore discussed measures to increase stockpiles of munitions and equipment, speed up production and strengthen the industrial base of their nations, including by making better use of the NATO Defence Planning Process, both to defend themselves and to ensure Ukraine has what it needs to prevail as a sovereign and independent nation.
- At a meeting of the **NATO Nuclear Planning Group**, gathering all 30 Allies minus France, Ministers echoed the view previously expressed by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg that both this NPG meeting and **nuclear exercise 'Steadfast Noon'** the following week, were regular, long-planned events and not a response to Moscow's recent nuclear sabre rattling. "NATO's firm, predictable behaviour, our military strength, is the best way to prevent escalation," he said. "If we now created the grounds for any misunderstandings, miscalculations in Moscow about our willingness to protect and defend all allies, we would increase the risk of escalation."
- The NATO Secretary General reiterated that NATO had not seen any changes in Russia's nuclear posture but remained vigilant. During his press conference at the end of the Defence Ministerial, he called **Russia's nuclear rhetoric dangerous and reckless**. He said that any use of nuclear weapons would fundamentally change the nature of the war and that "they [Russia] know that if they use nuclear weapons against Ukraine, it will have severe consequences. And they also know that a nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought."
- He also addressed a question regarding **Russia's upcoming annual nuclear exercise**, saying: "the Russian exercise, is an annual exercise. It's an exercise where they test and exercise their nuclear forces. We will monitor that, as we always do. And of course, we will remain vigilant not least in light of the veiled nuclear threats and the dangerous nuclear rhetoric we have seen from the Russian side."

III. PROTECTION OF ALLIED CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Ministers addressed how to better protect critical infrastructure following the recent sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines. This includes **enhanced vigilance in the Baltic and North Seas** with a doubling of NATO's naval presence there, **increased security around key installations and enhanced intelligence-sharing and surveillance across all domains**, from space to undersea capabilities.
- The Secretary General announced that senior resilience experts from all Allies would meet at NATO for the first time this year and address the resilience of critical undersea and energy infrastructure, including when it comes to cyber security.

IV. NATO OPERATIONS AND MISSIONS

- NATO's missions and operations were the focus of a final Ministerial meeting of Allied Defence Ministers together with EU High Representative Josep Borrell and Invitees Finland and Sweden. It was an opportunity, in particular, to confirm **NATO's continuing strong commitment to its engagements in [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Kosovo](#) and [Iraq](#)** as well as to underline the importance of strengthening and deepening NATO-EU cooperation in today's more unpredictable world.
- Asked about the risk that Russia might veto the renewal of the **EUFOR Althea** mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the NATO Secretary General replied: "I will not speculate about whether the mandate for Operation EUFOR Althea will be renewed or not. The only thing I will say is that it is in nobody's interest that the mandate is not renewed,

because the EU presence there and with the support from NATO is helping to address the challenges Bosnia-Herzegovina faces.”

- Noting the recent hike in tensions between **Belgrade and Pristina**, he called on all parties to “behave responsibly, show restraint and avoid violence. The EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is the only way forward. And KFOR stands ready to intervene if required.”

V. OTHER INITIATIVES

- At the start of the second day, Defence Ministers from 14 NATO Allies and Finland signed a Letter of Intent for the development of a “**European Sky Shield Initiative**”. Spearheaded by Germany, the initiative aims to create a European air and missile defence system through the common acquisition of air defence equipment and missiles by European nations. This will strengthen NATO’s Integrated Air and Missile Defence.
- NATO Defence Ministers agreed to establish a **Review Board to govern the responsible development and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and data across the NATO Enterprise. The Board’s first task will be to develop a user-friendly Responsible AI certification standard, including quality controls and risk mitigation, that will help align new AI and data projects with NATO’s [Principles of Responsible Use approved in October 2021](#). The Board will also serve as a unique platform to exchange best practices, guide innovators and operational end-users.
- During his press conference at the end of the Ministerial, the Secretary General said he was looking forward to signing a **new Joint Declaration with the Presidents of the EU Council and Commission in the near future**.

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