

NATO's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge. NATO Allies stand in solidarity in response to the pandemic. “NATO and Allied military personnel have been key in supporting civilian efforts – setting up field hospitals, providing military airlift, sharing medical expertise, and helping to develop innovative responses,” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said about the Alliance’s role in the relief effort.

While we continue to take all the necessary measures to protect our armed forces, NATO’s operational readiness remains undiminished. Our forces remain vigilant and prepared to respond to any threat. During the COVID-19 pandemic, NATO continues to deliver credible and effective deterrence and defence.

Preparing for the future of COVID-19

NATO Foreign and Defense Ministers recognised the need to do even more to prepare for a resurgence of the disease at their meetings in April 2020. Defence Ministers will continue to assess NATO’s response when they meet again in June. NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) is developing a plan for how we can further speed up the way we provide support, to prepare for the future of the virus.

NATO is supporting innovation through research and scientific collaboration on COVID-19. For example, NATO has tapped into its pool of 6,000 defence scientists, calling for ideas to improve virus detection and decontamination. Through the **NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme**, Italian and Swiss scientists are collaborating on a NATO-supported project to develop rapid COVID-19 diagnostics.

As part of a coordinated approach, NATO is working closely with other international organisations, including the European Union. Allied Defence Ministers discussed together with the EU preparations for the long-term effects of COVID-19.



NATO launched a Science for Peace and Security Programme project on 5 May 2020 with Italy’s Istituto Superiore di Sanità (National Health Institute) and Tor Vergata University Hospital together with the University Hospital of Basel University in Switzerland to develop new tools for a rapid and accurate diagnosis of infection.

How NATO is helping to curb the pandemic

Hundreds of thousands of troops have been supporting civilian efforts across the Alliance. SACEUR is coordinating current military support and a plan to make even more capabilities available. Military forces from across the Alliance have:

- flown more than 350 flights to transport medical personnel and more than 1,000 tonnes of equipment,
- helped build almost 100 field hospitals and over 25,000 treatment beds, and
- deployed thousands of medical personnel in support of civilian efforts.

NATO’s **Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)** is helping to coordinate assistance, including medical and financial support. The EADRCC is NATO’s main civil emergency response mechanism. The Centre operates on a 24/7 basis, coordinating requests and offers of assistance. Since the start of the crisis, the EADRCC has coordinated requests from UN OCHA and 15 NATO and partner countries, garnering dozens of responses in return.

The **Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC)** and the **Strategic Airlift International Solution (SALIS)** programmes, managed by the **NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA)**, have delivered over 1,000 tonnes of medical supplies to Allies including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.



A C-17 military plane, part of the Strategic Airlift Capability, delivered medical supplies to Bulgaria on 17 April 2020.

NATO also enables Allies to achieve economies of scale in purchasing and transporting medical equipment. **Logistics support** provided by NSPA has helped 12 NATO Nations to acquire key COVID-19 relief material, and further shipments of medical supplies to Allies are ongoing. NSPA is also driving innovative initiatives, producing and donating 3D printed supplies to Italy to help with COVID-19 response.

NATO's **Rapid Air Mobility** initiative has facilitated the delivery of medical supplies and Personal Protective Equipment to and from several countries, including the United Kingdom, Turkey, the United States and Italy. To deliver aid to wherever it is needed quickly, SACEUR has managed through this initiative – in close cooperation with EUROCONTROL – to reduce the time it takes for flights to be cleared by air traffic control. To facilitate flight plans, air traffic control now uses a dedicated NATO call sign for relief flights. This step ensures faster travel time and was made possible through coordination with EUROCONTROL.

The **Movements Coordination Centre Europe** (MCCE) provides coordination for the use of airlift, sealift and land movement assets. Based in the Netherlands, the Centre is supporting NATO, the European Union and individual countries, by matching military transport requests with available assets. Recent examples of cooperation include the coordination of two requests from Lithuania for personal protective equipment. This Centre also provided support to Luxembourg, using a national freight contract with Cargolux to generate two B747F cargo aircraft flights.

In addition to preventative measures taken at NATO installations around the globe, NATO and Allies are helping local authorities in locations where we are deployed, including Afghanistan and Kosovo. For example, on 7 April the United States-led KFOR Regional Command East delivered gloves, face masks and other medical supplies to the Mayors of Mitrovica North and South in Kosovo. In April, KFOR also donated personal protective equipment to hospitals in Pristina and Gracanica and delivered more than 50 donations of food and clothing to 14 Kosovo municipalities, in coordination with local charities and the Red Cross of Kosovo. In Afghanistan, the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission facilitated the delivery of medical supplies and personal protective equipment to the Afghan security forces in different provinces, including Panjshir, Parwan, Helmand, Nimroz and Nuristan. Critical assistance has also been delivered to NATO's newest members, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Montenegro received this support from the Netherlands, Turkey and the United States; North Macedonia received assistance from the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey. Furthermore, NATO and individual Allies and partners have coordinated deliveries of aid to other partners such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Georgia, Iraq, the Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Serbia and Ukraine.



In March, NSPA helped Luxembourg to increase its hospital capacity by providing field hospital tents, mobilising equipment in less than 24 hours. NSPA will also deliver a fully equipped hospital to Italy.

More information: <https://www.nato.int/covid19>

Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC):
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_117757.htm

NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA):
<https://www.nspa.nato.int/en/index.htm>

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