

NATO's Readiness Action Plan



At NATO's Wales Summit in September 2014, Allied leaders approved a Readiness Action Plan to ensure the Alliance is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. The plan provides a comprehensive package of measures to respond to the changes in the security environment in and near Europe. It responds to the challenges posed by Russia as well as the risks emanating from the southern neighbourhood, Middle East and North Africa. These measures are defensive, proportionate, and fully in line with NATO's international obligations.

The Readiness Action Plan contains two pillars:

Assurance Measures – enhanced presence of NATO forces on the territory of eastern Allies, on a rotational basis.

Adaptation Measures – changes to the Alliance's long-term military posture and capabilities.

Assurance Measures



Assurance measures were initiated in May 2014 and are ongoing. As set out in the Wales Summit Declaration, they include a "continuous air, land, and maritime presence and military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance... on a rotational basis". They can be scaled up or down depending on the security situation. All 28 Allies contribute to the effort.

As part of the Assurance Measures NATO has:

- Increased the number of aircraft on air-policing patrols over the Baltics and the number of bases for Baltic Air Policing. Belgium, Italy, Poland and Spain currently provide a total of sixteen aircraft.
- Deployed aircraft to Bulgaria, Poland and Romania for training and exercises.
- Commenced AWACS surveillance flights over the territory of our eastern Allies.
- Commenced Maritime Patrol Aircraft flights along NATO's eastern periphery.
- Sent more ships to patrol the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.
- Deployed ground troops to the eastern parts of the Alliance for training and exercises, on a rotational basis.
- Conducted over 200 NATO and national exercises in Europe in 2014.
- Several Allies have also sent ground and air forces to Eastern Europe for training and exercises on a bilateral basis.

Adaptation Measures



Adaptation measures will enhance NATO's military posture and readiness levels. They include:

- Enhancing the NATO Response Force (NRF) to make it more responsive and capable. Currently, this is a joint force of around 13,000 troops. At their meeting in February 2015, Allied Defence Ministers decided that the NRF will become a highly flexible and capable division-size joint force.
- A new Spearhead Force (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force), as the flagship element of the enhanced NRF. This will comprise a multinational brigade (approximately 5,000 troops), with up to five battalions, supported by air, maritime and special forces. Some troops will be ready to move within two to three days. NATO is working to stand up the new force in 2016. In the meantime, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway are leading an interim Spearhead Force, which is already training and exercising.

- The establishment of a multinational NATO command and control presence on the territories of eastern Allies. At their meeting in February 2015, Allied Defence Ministers decided on the immediate establishment of the first six multinational command and control elements – the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) – on the territories of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania initially. These elements will facilitate the rapid deployment of NATO forces to the region, if required. They will also act as a liaison between national and NATO forces and assist with defence planning and multinational training and exercises. They are each expected to host several dozen NATO personnel.
- Raising the readiness and capabilities of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, Poland. This headquarters will be able to command forces deployed to the Baltic States and Poland, if so required, and will become a hub for regional cooperation. Denmark, Germany and Poland are leading this work. Romania has also expressed an intention to make available a new deployable Multinational Divisional Headquarters as Multinational Division Southeast.
- Enhancing NATO's Standing Naval Forces with more ships and more types of ships.
- The improvement of NATO's ability to reinforce its eastern Allies through preparation of national infrastructure, such as airfields and ports.
- More exercises focused on crisis management and collective defence.

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