

NATO's Readiness Action Plan



“In order to ensure that our Alliance is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to the new security challenges, today we have approved the NATO Readiness Action Plan. It provides a coherent and comprehensive package of necessary measures to respond to the changes in the security environment on NATO’s borders and further afield that are of concern to Allies.

It responds to the challenges posed by Russia and their strategic implications. It also responds to the risks and threats emanating from our southern neighbourhood, the Middle East and North Africa.

“The Plan strengthens NATO’s collective defence. It also strengthens our crisis management capability. The Plan will contribute to ensuring that NATO remains a strong, ready, robust, and responsive Alliance capable of meeting current and future challenges from wherever they may arise.”

- NATO Wales Summit declaration, 5 September 2014



NATO’s Readiness Action Plan includes immediate reinforcement of NATO’s presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, which has been in place since May 2014 (“assurance measures”), and longer-term changes to NATO’s force posture (“adaptation measures”). The adaptation measures will increase our readiness and allow the Alliance to deal with any security challenges, including those from the east and the south.

Assurance Measures - immediate increased military presence and activity for assurance and deterrence in the eastern part of the Alliance.

Adaptation Measures - changes to the Alliance’s long-term military posture and capabilities to enable it to respond more quickly to emergencies wherever they arise.

Assurance Measures

The assurance measures are a series of land, sea and air activities in, on and around the territory of NATO Allies in Central and Eastern Europe, designed to reinforce their defence, reassure their populations and deter potential aggression. These are a direct result of Russia’s aggressive actions in Ukraine.

All 28 Allies are contributing to these measures on a rotational basis. The measures can be stepped up or reduced as necessary, depending on the security situation.

Since May 2014, Assurance Measures have included:

- NATO has increased the number of fighter jets on air-policing patrols over the Baltic States, and deployed fighter jets to Romania and Poland.
- Hungary and Germany took over air-policing duties from Belgium, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom in September 2015.
- Portugal and the United States have also deployed aircraft to Romania for training.
- NATO has conducted AWACS surveillance flights over the territory of our eastern Allies, and maritime patrol aircraft flights along our eastern borders.
- NATO has intensified maritime patrols in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean with the Standing NATO Maritime Groups and Standing NATO Mine Counter-Measures Groups.
- NATO has deployed ground troops to the eastern parts of the Alliance for training and exercises, on a rotational basis.
- NATO has conducted more exercises focused on crisis management and collective defence. Major exercises in 2015 include *Joint Warrior* (11 – 23 April: naval exercise in the



North Atlantic - 13,000 troops); *Dynamic Mongoose* (04 –15 May: anti -submarine warfare exercise off Norway - 5,000 troops); *Baltops* (05 – 20 June: naval and amphibious exercise in the Baltic Sea - 4,500 troops); *Sabre Strike* (08 – 19 June: land exercise in the Baltic states and Poland - 6,000 troops); *Noble Jump* (10 – 21 June - 2,100 troops); *Trident Joust* (17 – 28 June: headquarter exercise in Bulgaria, Romania and Italy - 1,500 troops) and *Trident Juncture* (21 October – 06 November: Italy, Portugal and Spain - 36,000 troops).

- Several Allies have also sent ground and air forces to Eastern Europe for training and exercises on a bilateral basis.

Adaptation Measures

Adaptation measures are longer-term changes to NATO's forces and command structure which will make the Alliance better able to react swiftly and decisively to sudden crises, whether these arise from the east or the south.

They include:

- Making the NATO Response Force (NRF) more responsive and capable.
The NRF will be increased to up to 40,000 forces, depending on the task it is needed for. This is more than double from the current level of 13,000 troops. The enhanced NRF will include land, sea, air and special forces presence.
At the same time, a new quick-reaction "Spearhead Force" (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, or VJTF) of around 5,000 ground troops is now up and running. Lead elements are able to start deploying in just two to three days. In June 2015, the Spearhead Force had its first deployment exercise: Noble Jump in Poland. It will be tested again during Exercise Trident Juncture 2015 before it is fully operational next year. The exercise will also certify the NRF Headquarters for 2016: Joint Force Command Brunssum.
The Spearhead and NRF forces will be based in their home countries, but will be able to deploy from there to wherever they are needed for exercises or crisis response. Leadership and composition of the Spearhead Force (or VJTF - Very High Readiness Joint Task Force) and NRF will rotate on an annual basis. In 2016, when the Spearhead force is fully operational, it will be led by Spain.
France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Turkey and the United Kingdom - have already offered to serve as lead nations in the following years.
- Establishing small multinational NATO headquarters - or "NATO Force Integration Units" – NFIUs - on the territories of eastern Allies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania).
These NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) were inaugurated in September 2015.
They will be staffed by about 40 national and NATO specialists. Their task is to improve cooperation and coordination between NATO and national forces, and prepare and support exercises and any deployments needed.
Two more NFIUs will be set up in Hungary and Slovakia.
- Raising the readiness and capabilities of the Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters in Szczecin, Poland and enhancing its role as a hub for regional cooperation.
- Establishing a new deployable multinational headquarters for the Southeast in Romania.
- Pre-positioning military supplies on the territory of eastern Allies.
- Improving NATO's ability to reinforce its eastern Allies through preparation of national infrastructure, such as airfields and ports.
- Setting up a new standing Joint Logistic Support Group Headquarters, to support deployed forces.
- Developing a new concept of advance defence planning.
- Faster political and military decision-making. This includes giving NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) the authority to prepare troops immediately when Allies decide this is needed.

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