

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 increased military activity 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 responsiveness and allow the Alliance to deal with security challenges, including those from the east and the south.

Assurance Measures - 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 reassure their populations and deter potential aggression. These measures are in response to Russia's aggressive actions to NATO's east.

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

Since May 2014, Assurance Measures have included:

- Fighter jets on air-policing patrols over the Baltic States, and deployed fighter jets to Romania and Poland.
- Spain and Belgium taking over air-policing duties from Hungary and Germany in January 2016.
- Portugal and the United States deploying aircraft to Romania for training.
- NATO AWACS surveillance flights over the territory of our eastern Allies, and maritime patrol aircraft flights along our eastern borders.
- Intensified NATO 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.
- Deployment of 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. Over 100 of the nearly 300 exercises conducted in 2015 were in support of NATO's assurance measures.
- 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 that will improve the Alliance's ability 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.**

In 2015, the size of the NRF roughly tripled, from 13,000 to about 40,000 troops. This enhanced NRF includes land, sea, air and special forces components.

At the same time, a new quick-reaction "Spearhead Force" (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, or VJTF) of around 20,000, of which about 5,000 are ground troops, is now operational and is ready within days to deploy to wherever it is needed. In June 2015, the Spearhead Force participated in its first deployment exercise: Noble Jump in Poland. It was tested again during Exercise Trident Juncture and is now certified as part of the NRF for 2016. The exercise also certified 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, the Spearhead Force will be led by Spain. France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Turkey and the United Kingdom have 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 activated in September 2015.

They will be staffed by about 40 national and multinational 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 have been approved and will be set up in Hungary and Slovakia.

Additional adaptation measures include

- 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 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.

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