



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Keynote speech

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the opening of the NATO Transformation Seminar

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Thank you General General Paloméros. Thank you to the entire Allied Command Transformation for your very warm welcome. It's a really great pleasure to be here.

Allied Command Transformation is a symbol of the strength of our Alliance and a symbol of our transatlantic bond. Based in Virginia and led by a French general and staffed by people from across the Alliance and from partners. This is really a symbol of the cohesion of the Alliance.

Allied Command Transformation plays an important role in NATO's continuous adaptation to a changing world. And in the last year, Russia's annexation of Crimea, its aggressive actions in Ukraine and the rise of violent extremism in North Africa and in the Middle East have really changed our security environment dramatically.

So we have to face the facts. These challenges will not go away any time soon. So we have to be

prepared for the unexpected and stand ready to sustain our efforts for the years to come.

And as you know, NATO is used to the long haul. And one of our greatest strengths is our ability to adapt. For 40 years, during the Cold War, the challenge was clear and largely predictable. NATO deterred attacks and kept our nations safe without firing a shot.

Then for the next 25 years, we went out of area. Together with our partners we went into combat beyond our borders to manage crises that could threaten us at home. This was a paradigm shift for NATO.

And now as we are... as we see another major shift in the security landscape, NATO is once again making fundamental changes. Today, we do not have the luxury to choose between collective defence and crisis management. For the first time in NATO's history we have to do both at the same time.

The Alliance has already done a great deal to respond to this new more volatile environment. And Allied Command Transformation plays an important role in that adaptation.

We are implementing the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War. We are increasing NATO's presence in our Eastern Allied countries and the readiness of our forces.

The NATO Response Force will more than double to up to 30,000 troops. Its centrepiece is the Spearhead Force of 5,000 troops with lead elements ready to move within as little as 48 hours.

At the same time, we are setting up command units in six of our Eastern Allies. And this is only the beginning of a great and important adaptation of NATO. And as we prepare for the Warsaw Summit next year, we need to address many of the different elements in the great adaptation of NATO.

And let me today raise three of the issues we have to face as we move towards Warsaw. First, how to deal with hybrid warfare? Hybrid is the dark reflection of our comprehensive approach. We use a combination of military and non-military means to stabilize countries. Others use it to destabilize them.

Of course, hybrid warfare is nothing new. It is as old as the Trojan horse. What is different is that the scale is bigger; the speed and intensity is higher; and that it takes place right at our borders.

Russia has used proxy soldiers, unmarked Special Forces, intimidation and propaganda, all to lay a thick fog of confusion; to obscure its true purpose in Ukraine; and to attempt deniability. So NATO must be ready to deal with every aspect of this new reality from wherever it comes. And that means we must look closely at how we prepare for; deter; and if necessary defend against hybrid warfare.

To be prepared, we must be able to see and analyse correctly what is happening; to see the patterns behind events which appear isolated and random; and quickly identify who is behind and why.

So therefore, we need to sharpen our early warning and improve our situation awareness. This

is about intelligence, expert knowledge and analytical capacity. So we know when an attack is an attack.

Hybrid warfare seeks to exploit any weakness. So scientists who are well-governed and well-integrated are more resilient and less vulnerable. So good governance is an essential part of defence.

And this is why we need a comprehensive approach, working together with the European Union and other international partners. We also must deter hybrid threats.

Hybrid warfare is a probe, a test of our resolve to resist and to defend ourselves. And it can be a prelude to a more serious attack; because behind every hybrid strategy, there are conventional forces, increasing the pressure and ready to exploit any opening. We need to demonstrate that we can and will act promptly whenever and wherever necessary.

The NATO Response Force provides us with a range of options from large-scale military actions to lower [? inaudible] disability special forces. It sends a clear signal that if any Ally comes under attack, the entire Alliance will respond swiftly. Then if deterrence should fail, we must be prepared to act and to defend our Allies.

In a crisis, the first responder will be the nation that is targeted. But NATO must be there to support any national efforts. This is a matter of planning and of political will; and making sure that we complement and reinforce each other. We need to be able to deal with complex evolving hybrid situations, including cyber-aggression.

Cyber is now a central part of virtually all crises and conflicts. NATO has made it clear that cyber-attacks can potentially trigger an Article 5 response. We need to detect and counter cyber-attacks early; improve our resilience; and be able to recover quickly.

A more active cyber policy should be a focus as we plan for Warsaw. Cyber defence is just one of the capabilities we need in order to deal with the changed security environment... which brings me to my second point: how do we keep our edge?

While we have been cutting our defence budgets, others have invested heavily. Since 1990, there has been a steady decline in our defence expenditures. For some time, that was possible to explain by the end of the Cold War and less tensions. But during the last years, with increased threats, we have continued to decrease defence spending, especially among the European NATO Allies.

And while we have reduced our defence spending, others have increased. Russia is investing in new tanks, new aircraft and new ships, new submarines and long-range cruise missiles. China is testing its first carrier battle group; building a second. And it has just announced a further 10% increase in its defence budget.

We have to face the fact that we no longer have a monopoly on advanced technology within the Alliance. In Europe, few major programmes in cutting-edge capabilities are being launched, potentially degrading our long-term capabilities and our research and development base.

And with lower demand, more and more companies are shifting away from defence. We risk losing the skills and the research capacity we should need in a crisis.

What we need now is the political will and the resources from nations to improve our capabilities; to keep our edge now and in the future. The Alliance needs an innovation strategy for the coming decades.

NATO can make a real difference by connecting national capabilities, making our Alliance greater than the sum of its parts. But NATO cannot substitute for a lack of national investments. And that is why NATO leaders last year recognized that we need to invest more in our defence. It is vital that we achieve this.

Of course, it is important that we spend smarter. But we cannot get more from less indefinitely. Even if we have all the capabilities we need, military force can only be as effective as the political decisions that are directed.

And that leads me to my third point, how do we improve decision-making? As an Alliance of democracies, our greatest strength is our democratic legitimacy. Of course, there are often differences and different opinions when you bring together 28 different democratic nations. And I have to admit that building consensus is not always easy. And it takes times.

But once it's done, it sends a very power signal: 28 Allies acting as one. The issues we are facing are complex and fast-moving. Cyber-attacks happen in seconds. Missiles reach their targets in minutes. Little green men can move within hours. So we must also be able to move fast.

While political control and oversight is essential, it is crucial that we reconcile oversight with speed. We have done it before. And we should be able to do it also in the future.

We need to develop a common understanding of events and our potential adversaries. This will provide us with the basis to effectively identify, anticipate, plan and react in a crisis. The military and the political sides of NATO need to act seamlessly.

We need to be tested through simulations and exercises. There is a particular role here for Allied Command Transformation to test NATO in realistic and time-pressured scenarios.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there has been a fundamental shift in the level and the nature of the threats we face. That is why, once again, NATO has to adapt to meet new challenges. Our discussions today and tomorrow are an important contribution to these efforts as we move forward to the Warsaw Summit.

Over the years, this seminar has been an ideal forum in which to discuss the big challenges of the day. I know that this year will be no different. So I'm looking forward to a lively debate and that we develop our common strategy together. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Mister Secretary General. I think we have a few minutes to follow up your comments briefly if we may.

I wonder, you just laid out a strategic landscape, a strategic picture that's going to inform our conversations over the next two days. I began to see that idea of thinking about the work to be done on NATO's strategy towards Warsaw.

You led off with hybrid. And you refer to it as potentially needing to have both to be able to

deter and defend against hybrid. And good governance is part of that defence. So how do you see NATO's role in a hybrid strategy? Is it simply backing up with hard power national responses? Or are there new capabilities the Alliance is going to require for the hybrid challenges it faces?

JENS STOLTENBERG: In one way, it's both. We need classical conventional forces. Hybrid is about reduced warning time. It's about deception. It's about a mixture of military and non-military means. So therefore we have to be able to react quickly and swiftly. And so when we are increasing the readiness and the preparedness of our forces, well that is also an answer to the hybrid threat.

When we are doing more to increase our capacity when it comes to intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, then it's also an answer to hybrid threats.

And also I think we have to remember that the Read... the Spearhead Force is not only about land forces; but it is also sea, air and also special operation forces. So to increase the capability, the readiness of our conventional forces is also part of the answer to hybrid.

But then, as I underlined, we have to have a comprehensive approach and to increase the resilience of our societies. Cyber is extremely important as part of the strategy which we are developing against hybrid warfare; but also working with partners, for instance the European Union to improve governance; to increase the general resilience of countries; and therefore, also, reduce the vulnerability towards hybrid warfare.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. You referred in the context of that to Russia; that Russia has used both hybrid tactics to challenge the Alliance as well as investments in conventional and nuclear forces. So how do you see the shift from the Alliance considering Russia as an inspiring strategic partner to a potential adversary? And is the challenge... is the target really Russia in Ukraine in this grey zone? Or is it targeting the Alliance?

JENS STOLTENBERG: We have to focus on both. Our main responsibility, our core task is to defend all Allies against any threat. And that's the reason why we are adapting our forces; increasing the readiness; implementing the Readiness Action Plan; and we're going to do much more.

But in addition to focussing on our own collective defence, we're also working with partners. So, for instance, we have to deliver support for what is now referred to as the countries in between... the countries between NATO and Russia. And they are valuable partners for us. We work with them. We have to do more to develop the partnerships with them. And I believe very strongly that to focus more on partnerships, defence-capacity building, helping them to modernize, to reform and increase their capability to defend themselves will make them more stable and us more secure. So the whole idea of developing partnerships is more important than ever and also to what we see, for instance, in Ukraine and Georgia and Moldova.

MODERATOR: Thank you, and you mentioned the Readiness Action Plan and the work underway within the Alliance right now as potentially only the beginning of this adaptation of NATO's military forces. What kind of progress do you expect by the Warsaw Summit on the elements of the Spearhead Force, the Readiness Action Plan? And how is this...? Is this force about deterrence in the East? Or is this a tool for the Alliance to think about in terms of crisis

management as it looks across the Mediterranean, to turmoil in the Middle East?

JENS STOLTENBERG: The High Readiness Force, the Spearhead Force is something which is relevant and available both when it comes to countering threats, challenges in the East and the South. And we have to be prepared for the unexpected. So therefore, we have to have this kind of forces available both... or addressing many different kinds of challenges and threats.

I foresee that by Warsaw we have both implemented on the measures which we have already agreed on. But in addition we should have developed more concrete strategies and plans when it comes to, for instance, as I mentioned, cyber, decision-making and, of course, some of the elements which is now on the drawing board like a sea component and the naval component and the air component of the Spearhead Force. So there are many elements, some are quite clear already; some we have to develop. But the thing is that we are just in the beginning of a big transformation, a big adaptation of NATO facing a new security environment.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Mister Secretary General, you've set, I think, the target for us in the next couple of days to think about the hybrid challenge; how the Alliance keeps its military edge, its capability edge, and the improvement in decision-making. You've given us... You informed the agenda that we'll take up. Please join me in thanking the Secretary General for the strategic.... (APPLAUSE)