

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 initially in the eastern part of the Alliance, and tailored measures for Turkey since December 2015 - a further demonstration of Allies’ resolve to react rapidly and decisively when required.

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, and Turkey, designed to reassure their populations and deter potential aggression. These measures are in response to Russia’s aggressive actions.

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

Assurance Measures include:

- Fighter jets on air-policing patrols.
- Deployment of ground troops to the eastern parts of the Alliance for NATO training and exercises, on a rotational basis.
- 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.
- Several Allies have also sent forces to Eastern Europe for training and exercises on a bilateral 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.



Adaptation Measures

Adaptation measures are longer-term changes to NATO's forces and command structure that 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.

Within the NRF, 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 VJTF 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 elements 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 VJTF and NRF will rotate on an annual basis. For 2016, the Spearhead land force is being led by Spain. The UK is now preparing to lead in 2017.

France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Turkey 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, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).**

The first NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) were activated in September 2015. NFIUs for Hungary and Slovakia were approved by Defence Ministers in October 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 NRF exercises and any deployments needed.

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 divisional 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.

The Readiness Action Plan has successfully delivered the responsiveness and flexibility required to deal with the changed security environment. As the security environment continues to evolve, the Alliance will continue to respond as necessary. The successful implementation of the Readiness Action Plan paves the way for the adaptation of the Alliance through its ongoing work to strengthen the Alliance's Deterrence and Defence posture.

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