



NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

# Speech

**by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence**

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09 Mar. 2022 - | Last updated: 12 Mar. 2022 11:44

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(As delivered - virtually)



Thank you so much Kerry, it's great to see you again.  
Thank you so much for inviting me here today.

As Ambassador to NATO, you were instrumental in Canada's decision to lead our multinational battlegroup in Latvia,  
which I actually visited just yesterday with Prime Minister Trudeau.

This was a clear example of your strong personal commitment, Kerry, to our Alliance. So, thank you so much.

We meet at a dark time for our security.  
Russia has shattered peace in Europe.  
President Putin has instigated a brutal war against a peaceful, sovereign Ukraine.  
Simply because it dares to choose its own path.  
The path of democracy and freedom.

President Putin's war is not only against international law,  
it seeks to destroy the entire international rules-based order,  
on which our peace and security depend.

Our message to President Putin is clear.  
Stop this war.  
Withdraw your forces.  
And engage in diplomacy.  
I would like to recognize the leadership of President Zelenskyy.  
And the exceptional bravery of the Ukrainian people and armed forces, as they defend their homeland.

We see with horror the rising civilian casualties.  
The senseless destruction of cities and infrastructure.  
And the massive humanitarian crisis.  
This is heart breaking for all of us.  
Including for Canada, with its large Ukrainian community.

In response, NATO Allies have been stepping up support for Ukraine.  
Imposing costs on Russia.  
And bolstering our deterrence and defence.

Allies are providing more military, humanitarian and financial aid to Ukraine.  
To help Ukraine uphold its fundamental right to self-defence, as enshrined in the UN Charter.

At the same time, we are imposing unprecedented costs on Russia.  
Targeting Russian companies, banks, and energy suppliers.  
As well as oligarchs close to President Putin.  
And the private sector is contributing as well, from the energy sector to high-tech companies.

NATO has a responsibility to ensure that this conflict does not escalate beyond Ukraine.  
Because this would be even more dangerous, destructive, and deadly.  
For Ukraine, and for all of us.  
So Allies are also significantly increasing our defensive presence in the east of our Alliance.  
With thousands more troops, and hundreds more aircraft and ships.  
More than doubling our presence there in the recent weeks.

This sends a clear message that we will protect and defend every inch of Allied territory.

Canada is playing a leading role in our response.

For many years, you have helped to strengthen the Ukrainian armed forces and institutions. Including with training for tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops – many of whom are on the front lines today.

You have also provided Ukraine with hundreds of millions of dollars of support. And essential equipment.

We are all inspired by the way in which the Ukrainian forces are bravely resisting the Russian invasion.

And Canada's support has helped to make this possible.

Canada is also making significant contributions to the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War.

Yesterday, as I said, I was with Prime Minister Trudeau and Defence Minister Anand in Latvia. Where Canada has led NATO's multinational battlegroup with skill and dedication for several years.

I thanked them for Canada's decision to deploy hundreds more troops to reinforce our presence in the region.

As well as other capabilities, including in the air and at sea.

For whatever happens in the months ahead, whatever Moscow seeks to achieve through violence and aggression, it will fail.

It is failing already.

President Putin wants less NATO on Russia's borders.

But he is getting more NATO.

He wants to divide Europe and North America.

But we stand more united than ever.

He wants to hold European nations hostage with Russian oil and gas.

Instead he is pushing countries to diversify their supplies.

And move even faster to a renewable future.

And most of all, President Putin wants to snuff out the flame of freedom and democracy in Ukraine.

But however dark the coming days and weeks may be, the flame will continue to burn.

Europe and North America will help keep that flame alive.

We stand in solidarity with our partner, Ukraine.

And we will protect and defend all NATO Allies.

Thank you.

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**Ambassador Kerry Buck [Moderator]:** Thank you very much, Secretary General. I will launch the discussion, if I may, with a question, or two questions, to allow the audience time to formulate their own questions.

We should have as much as half an hour, I hope, for the discussion. And with that, I'll begin. So as you said, Secretary General, you were in Latvia and met with Prime Minister Trudeau yesterday. We're seeing that on the screen. So can you tell us what you're hearing from leaders in the Baltics about the risks that they're facing? Is NATO ready to deter Russia in the East of the Alliance? And how is that deterrence changing? Will NATO have to move to permanent defence in the East? Your thoughts on that would be very much appreciated.

**NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg:** NATO's core task is to prevent an attack on any NATO Ally. And we have been successfully doing that for more than 70 years. We actually started, as you also mentioned, a very big adaptation of NATO back in 2014, after the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia's move into, and support of the separatists, in Donbass.

So since then, NATO Allies have invested more, increased defence spending 270 billion in total. They have acquired new, advanced capabilities. And we have increased our presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. For the first time we have combat ready battlegroups in the East. And we have tripled the size of, for instance, the NATO Response Force. Then, actually when we saw the intelligence.. so we have done a lot already over all these years.

Then, when we saw intelligence last fall, and we were also very transparent about the risk of Russia invading Ukraine, then we stepped up further. So we increased the readiness of the NATO Response Force. We started to deploy more capabilities to the eastern part of the Alliance. And over the last weeks Allies have really stepped up. Canada, Germany, doubling the number of troops in Lithuania, the United States sending in more troops to the eastern part of the Alliance.

And I myself I've been in Romania, I've been in Latvia, in Estonia, in Poland. I met Canadian troops, US troops, many other troops, from many other NATO Allied countries. And they send a very clear message that we are there to protect and defend all them. And this has been our, I'd would say, imminent response to the crisis we have seen unfold after the invasion of Crimea.

But separate from that, or in addition to that imminent response, I think we need to actually now also have a serious assessment of longer-term adaptation of NATO. Our posture, our presence, and also how we can strengthen our ability to reinforce quickly.

We will have a Defence Ministerial Meeting in NATO next week. I think we will have a very important discussion there. I don't expect conclusions, but I expect that that will be kind of the first meeting where we start deliberations within the Alliance. And then, as we move towards the Summit in late June, we will then have a final decision. So we have already responded. We started in 2014. We stepped up during the autumn and especially after the innovation, but then there will also be some more longer-term changes. And that discussion has now started in [March].

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** Okay. Thank you very much. I'm going to turn to questions from the audience now and relay them to you. So the first question is from Ambassador [inaudible]. Thank

you, Ambassador, good to see you again. And he's asking if you think that one of the results of NATO's mission in Afghanistan was... emboldened Russia to try to test NATO's resolve in Ukraine.

**NATO Secretary General:** I think there's no meaning in speculating in that. Because we speak about two different challenges and events. We ended our mission in Afghanistan after close consultations between all Allies. We did so after we have been there for 20 years. And of course, it was hard to see the collapse of Kabul. And also how the leadership, the political military leadership in Kabul collapsed. And that also led to the collapse of the defence of Kabul and the Afghan Security Forces throughout the country.

But we have to understand that our mission in Afghanistan was not in vain. We went in after 9/11 and the main task, and the main reason we went in, was to fight international terrorism. And since 9/11 there has been no terrorist attacks organized from Afghanistan against any NATO country. But of course, we were not going to stay there forever. We will continue to be vigilant, we will continue to fight international terrorism. And therefore, we ended our mission because we thought the time has come to not continue to stay. So that's one story, on one issue.

In parallel or that, and especially since 2014, we have implemented a big change of NATO. Less focus on out of area operations and missions. Because even with our presence in Afghanistan, it was like 10,000 or very small compared to more than 100,000 not so many years ago. So I've seen a gradual shift from being in out of area operations, to strengthening collective defence in Europe with the high-end capabilities, with increased defence spending, high readiness, the battlegroups and all that, new command structure, and so on.

So, I think that Russia knows very well that we are there to protect and defend all Allies. They see that not only in words but also in deeds. And they see more North America in Europe. They see the United States, but also see Canada, the battlegroup that you supported and you actually were very instrumental in making sure that we got in place, was the first time Canada deployed troops on the ground to Europe since the Second World War.

So all of that has sent a very clear signal and continues to send a clear message to Russia that we are there to defend and protect all Allies.

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** Thank you very much. Two questions together turning back to Ukraine now. So the questions are: what are the red lines for NATO in Ukraine? Are there any red lines? But.. And link to that, if you could, should NATO and Canada be concerned about a potential threat from Russia to the Arctic? And what does NATO need to do about that?

**NATO Secretary General:** Ukraine is a highly valued partner. We support them. And we have supported them for many years. Especially Canada, but also the United States and United Kingdom, have provided significant training of tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops, provided essential equipment, antitank weapons, air defence systems. And NATO has also helped to modernize their defence and security institutions, cyber defence and other Allies have done this for many, many years. And Allies are now stepping up. I saw [Prime Minister] Trudeau announced actually new, additional support to Ukraine today during his visit to Berlin.

So, we provide support, we are stepping up, and we have supported them for many years. So we help them in their very courageous fight against invading Russian forces. But of course, that is not the same as being a NATO Ally. We provide support to Ukraine. For NATO Allies, we provide absolute security guarantees. An attack on one Ally will trigger the full response from the whole Alliance. And that's the difference between being a member and being a close partner. And to remove any room for miscalculation, or misunderstanding about our resolve, commitment, to protect and defend all Allies to Article 5 of the Founding Treaty, we have increased the presence on land, at sea and in the air. And that's the message we're sending again and again: support for Ukraine, absolute security guarantees for all Allies.

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** Thank you. The question from the audience. And I'll frame it as the audience has framed it. In light of the war in Ukraine, what concerns do you have that some countries, including Canada, still aren't living up to their 2014 promise to spend 2% of its GDP on defence?

**NATO Secretary General:** Canada is contributing in many ways to our collective defence, to our shared security. Canada lead [inaudible] the Baltic region with the battlegroup, increasing another number of troops there, providing extra frigate, maritime patrol aircraft, and stepping up further in many different ways.

Canada also lead our mission in Iraq, playing a key role in fighting terrorism. So Canada is contributing in many ways. And I welcome the announcements of further support and the Canadian contributions.

Then, of course, I would like to see all Allies to do even more. And therefore, I call on all Allies to step up. And I welcome the message from Prime Minister Trudeau that in light of the Russian brutal invasion of Ukraine, Canada will also then assess the need for further increases in defence spending.

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** So, I'd like to explore what you see as the new normal. You've spoken frequently about the current crisis being the new normal for NATO. So how is that the new normal? How do you see this as the new normal right now, but in the medium term what does NATO do to be prepared? What does NATO need to be prepared for in the medium term?

**NATO Secretary General:** I think it is obvious that we are faced with a new reality, new security environment, a new normal. And this is reflected in many different ways. And of course, the illegal, brutal invasion of Ukraine demonstrates this very clearly. Because what we see now is that Russia, more openly, is contesting core values for our security. Including the right of every nation to choose their own path, or NATO's right to protect and defend all Allies. And they're demonstrating their will to use force to obtain their objectives. Russia has claimed.. President Putin has clearly stated that it will be very serious if Finland and Sweden decide to apply for NATO membership. And he has threatened with what he called "military-technical consequences". So this is, this goes beyond Ukraine. This is about denying every nation in Europe the right to choose its own path and to become a NATO member, if they so want. NATO, we respect the decision of countries, regardless whether they apply for membership or not apply for a membership. That's a sovereign decision by every sovereign nation.

And then, Russia has also contested and challenged our right to protect all Allies. Because in his written proposal for a new security agreement between NATO and Russia, they sent us in December, it was one of the provisions is that we should remove all NATO troops and all NATO infrastructure from all countries that have joined NATO after 1987. That means 14 out of the 30 members we have in NATO, and the whole enlargement of the end of the Cold War, will be then some kind of a second-class members. If you look at this, and then combine that with the fact that you see that Russia and China are now operating more closely together, exercising more closely together, interacting militarily and politically more closely together, and that China has not been able to come out and condemn the invasion of Ukraine, and also to have the statement, the joint statement of President Xi and President Putin at the beginning of the Olympics, where China stated clearly that they, China now for the first time, criticize NATO enlargement. So we have two authoritarian powers, which are challenging the rules based order. Who are openly as against our core values: freedom of speech, freedom of expression, democracy, the rule of law and... oppressing those values in Hong Kong and in Ukraine, or in many other countries.

This is the new normal. This is the challenge we have to step up to. And that's exactly what we do. Europe and North America standing together.

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** Thank you so much. Yes, I saw the Russian proposal sent prior to Christmas and a one Russian Moscow newspaper said that President Putin has now asked the West for a live unicorn for Christmas.

So I was very worried and curious to see how those negotiations went. But as we've seen, they didn't go anywhere and... launched the full scale invasion.

May I turn, Secretary General, to nuclear issue? And many commentators are worried that the risk of President Putin resorting to the nuclear option is at the highest risk that we have seen. So if you could tell us your thoughts about his threats in this regard and the NATO strategic posture, that would be very helpful.

**NATO Secretary General:** President Putin's rhetoric on nuclear issues, his messages that we will see consequences, which the history has never seen before. And actually the way he has also, in a way, directly referred to and demonstrated in different presentations, the new nuclear capabilities of Russia, including hypersonic glide vehicles and other advanced weapon systems that can carry nuclear weapons, is reckless and dangerous. And it contradicts what Russia actually officially states. Because not so many weeks ago, Russia signed, together with other permanent members of the UN Security Council, a declaration where they restated that nuclear war cannot be one and should not never be formed.

And then, the next day, they have this, President Putin has this reckless nuclear rhetoric, which is contradicting the message of never fight a nuclear war. NATO's response is that we strongly believe that we should continue to work for nuclear disarmament. We have been doing that for many years. And actually, there are many things that has not worked as we hoped and planned for when it comes to Russia, but at least over the decades, there has been some very important nuclear disarmament agreements.

We have lost, or we have seen regularly the demise of the INF treaty banning intermediate range weapons but we still have the New START limiting the number of long-range weapon systems, which is important.

But at the same time, we also made it clear that as long as there are nuclear weapons NATO will remain the nuclear Alliance. Because we just don't believe that the world where NATO get rid of our nuclear weapons and then Russia, China, North Korea, keep theirs, that's not the safer world. So the way to reach a safer world without nuclear weapons, or with fewer nuclear weapons, is balanced, verifiable arms control. We're ready to do that. But as long as nuclear weapons exist, we have to make sure that we have a nuclear deterrence which is safe, and secure, and effective.

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** You were very clear, Secretary General, coming out of the last Ministerial Meeting about the NATO position on no-fly zones. We've also seen the humanitarian situation worsening with tremendous outflow of refugees from Ukraine. So if you could perhaps speak to us about the rationale for the position on no-fly zones and what NATO can do to help support some of the measures to get humanitarian assistance to those who need it.

**NATO Secretary General:** What we see, the pictures, the reports we see coming out from Ukraine, is painful, it's heinous, the violence. And we have seen credible reports about attacks against civilians, which is a war crime. And therefore, we continue to call on President Putin to end this war and to withdraw all his forces, and to sit down and engage in real efforts to find a political solution.

And of course, the first step should be to allow the humanitarian corridors to be established, and to respect those. NATO Allies are providing significant support to Ukraine. Of course, it's first and foremost the bravery, the courage of Ukrainian people, the Ukrainian leadership and its armed forces that has made it possible to actually fight back, stop the invading Russian armed forces. But our support is essential. And NATO Allies has supported and has stepped up and continues to provide support in many different ways to Ukraine: weapons, military support, but also humanitarian aid.

On the no-fly zones. What is important is that I think everyone has to understand that it's not only about declaring a no-fly zone, it has to be imposed. And the only way to impose a no-fly zone in a hostile environment, as we see in Ukraine right now, is to massively attack Russian air defence systems. We cannot operate a no-fly zone with all the Russian air defence systems intact. So no-fly zone will require massive attacks on Russian air defence systems. And it will require that we are ready to engage directly in confrontation with Russian planes. So no-fly zone entails NATO massively attacking Russian air defence systems in Ukraine, in Belarus, and in Russia. It entails direct confrontation between NATO air capabilities and Russian air capabilities. This will significantly escalate the war, the fighting in Ukraine. But also of course, risk a full-fledged war in Europe, involving NATO Allies. NATO against Russia. And that will lead to so much more human suffering, civilian casualties, destruction. And it will be extremely dangerous. So it is a painful decision made by NATO Allies. But we need to make sure that this conflict ends. We have to avoid that it expands, escalates. And that's exactly what we're doing. Providing support, but also acting in ways which doesn't trigger escalation of the conflict you now see in Ukraine.



**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** Thank you. You're being very generous with your time, Secretary General. And I think you.. I may end up, unless I get another burning question in the chat from the audience, I may end up with a question to you about cyber. So we've seen over the past few years, very sophisticated, both cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns from Russia in NATO Allies, all NATO Allies. So I'm curious about what you're seeing at NATO in terms of Russia in cyber and disinformation activity against Allies? And what conversations you had about the cyber threshold for Article 5?

**NATO Secretary General:** Well, cyber is, will be and is, a part of any military confrontation, there will be a cyber dimension. And of course, we are faced with this more blurred line between peace and war, hybrid tools, hybrid conflicts. And of course, Allies have reported about many different types of cyberattacks against political institutions, private companies. We have seen attempts to meddling in political, domestic, democratic processes in different countries, and attributed this to Russia in many of the cases.

So NATO has significantly stepped up the way we address cyber threats. We have, as you alluded to, also decided to make clear that a cyberattack can trigger Article 5. But we will never give the privilege to a potential adversary to tell exactly where that threshold is. But we will deem, we will assess, and then we will make our own decisions when we trigger Article 5.

Then, of course, we can respond in cyber. But we can also respond in another domain. We have established now cyber as a military domain alongside, air, sea, land and... space. And, for instance, for Ukraine we have, over the years but also recently, help them to improve their cyber defences, to protect their own networks. We recently signed the agreement with Ukraine on how to facilitate, support. That was before the invasion but Allies and NATO are helping with cyber defences. And because this is so important for Ukraine, but also for all NATO Allied countries.

**Ambassador Kerry Buck:** Thank you so much. Secretary General, I'm going to end into the questioning here. You have been, as I said, remarkably generous with your time. I know that you have and your staff have been working more than 24/7 since the invasion began. And I know as well that there will be a lot of work over the next few months heading into the Madrid Summit, responding to the crisis in Ukraine, the new Strategic Concept will be.. ever so more important right now and more difficult to decide how NATO can and should adapt to both the immediate concerns, the immediate crisis, but also some of the medium term risks, numerous risks that NATO is facing. So I would like to thank you very much for your kind words to me and your kind words to Canada. We are very, very supportive with NATO. It's the backbone of our security policy and something that we take to heart. So I thank you very much for your generous time this morning. And I thank the audience for their excellent questions as well.

**NATO Secretary General:** Thank you so much Kerry, great to see you again. Thank you.