

## **The next steps for the Alliance's Deterrence and Defence posture**

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Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine is often referred to as a "wake-up" call for NATO and its Allies. The awakening, however, started long before that. Witnessing over the years Russia's pattern of increasingly aggressive behaviour and its disregard for international rules and agreements, the NATO Military Authorities deemed it not only prudent but also necessary to improve NATO's collective defence strategies across the Alliance's territory and domains.

The premise for collective defence is to think ahead, imagining complex scenarios, for peacetime, crisis and conflict. To plan accordingly by designing solutions. And to prepare for the fact that conflict may present itself at any time. Ultimately, collective defence is about expecting the unexpected.

That is exactly what the NATO Military authorities have done. In 2019, Allied Chiefs of Defence established a new NATO Military Strategy. This outlined the two main threats to our Alliance: Russia and terrorist groups, indubitably launching NATO's ultimate evolution from crisis management to collective defence. Subsequently, NATO's Military Authorities began developing, almost in parallel, the Concept for the Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) and the Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) to ensure coherence across short-term and long-term planning as well as current and future capability requirements for the Alliance's Military Instrument-of-Power.

Therefore, when Russian tanks rolled across Ukrainian borders on 24 February 2022, NATO was ready with adequate

strategies and plans already in place. Within mere hours of the invasion, NATO was able to activate its defence plans from the Baltic to the Black Sea, scaling up its posture on the eastern flank and putting 40,000 troops under NATO command, backed by significant air and maritime capabilities.

Almost 20 months later, our Alliance is readier, stronger and more flexible than ever before. We now have eight multinational battlegroups positioned along the Alliance's eastern border. These can be scaled up to brigade-size, as required. We are transforming the NATO Response Force and increasing the number of our high readiness forces to well over 300,000. We are boosting our ability to reinforce, including with more pre-positioned equipment, more forward-deployed capabilities, and strengthened command and control.

At the NATO Summit in Vilnius last July, Allied Heads of State and Government took bold steps to further strengthen our deterrence and defence posture. They agreed three Regional Plans:

- the north, covering the Atlantic and European Arctic
- the centre, covering the Baltic region and central Europe
- the south, covering the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

These geographically specific plans describe how we plan to defend key and relevant places within our Alliance. They are the most comprehensive plans NATO has had since the end of the Cold War. The Regional Plans are accompanied by objective, threat-based Force Structure Requirements, which detail precisely which assets or capabilities are required in a crisis scenario.

From 15 to 17 September 2023, the NATO Chiefs of Defence and the Swedish Invitee Chief of Defence will gather in Oslo for a conference of the NATO Military Committee. Together, we will take forward the decisions taken in Vilnius.

The Chiefs of Defence will address how to make these plans fully executable, including with:

- more troops on higher readiness;
- capability building and development;
- adaptation of NATO's command and control structures;
- more enablement (logistics, host nation support, maintenance, replenishment and pre-positioning of stocks, military mobility);
- and more collective defence training and exercising.

Since Vilnius, NATO and national planning is more closely interlinked than ever before. This makes it crucial that Allies move forward decisively and closely consult each other every step of the way.

We will be updating these military plans as the threats that face us develop. That is all part of an intricate, cumbersome but always worthwhile process. These thousands of pages of planning are so much more than paperwork. They are proof that despite the growing instability and division in the world ... there are still nations who are willing and able to sit around the table, make compromises and find a common way forward. Nations who can put the "we" before the "me".

That does not mean the "me" is not important anymore. Collective defence starts at home. As Norway has shown time and time again: having a strong national defence is a key part of being able to contribute to international defence. In a "one for all, all for one" organisation, you have to work on the "one" AND on the "all" at the same time.

The trick is to connect it all. Just like Norway's Atlantic Road connects large and small, north, south, east and west. The NATO Military Committee represents 31 (soon 32) Armed

Forces who all have their own history, capabilities and threat perceptions. Rather than letting this divide us, we build our diversity into a strength. The only way to do that, is if you truly know and trust each other. There are armed forces around our table who have been working together long before NATO even existed. And every month, new initiatives for cooperation are launched. Undoubtedly, the Finnish and Swedish NATO membership will have a positive impact on the security of the Alliance, especially in the High North and the Baltic Sea region.

The NATO Military Committee is the place where all these work strands come together. Our role is to make sure that the more than 3 million men and women in uniform who serve our Alliance, are able to perform their sacred task. To protect all that is dear to us: freedom, democracy, and the sovereign rights of nations and people to determine their own destiny.

Our great band of brothers and sisters in uniform will make sure that while the rules-based international order is shaken, NATO Nations will not quiver. Just like the Norwegian Armed Forces' motto: we fight for everything we have and everything we are (*For alt vi har. Og alt vi er.*).