

NATO: "This is a grave moment for the security of Europe"

Alliance warns Russia's leaders

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USPA NEWS - After an extraordinary meeting of the North Atlantic Council, the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, said that "there are no NATO combat troops inside Ukraine at all. We have made it clear that we do not have any plans and intentional deploying NATO troops to Ukraine." But Alliance is vigilant and "we have already increased and we are increasing the presence of NATO troops in the Eastern part of the Alliance on NATO territory."

Ukraine is "a highly valued partner," said the Secretary General of NATO in a press conference. He remembered that "we have supported Ukraine for many, many years. We helped them to build a more modern capable armed force. Militarily, we have helped them to train equip, and in many different ways to strengthen their armed forces. We helped them with cyber defences with NATO Allies in different ways. But we don't have NATO troops in Ukraine, and we don't have any plans to send NATO troops into Ukraine."

But NATO are there to protect and defend all NATO Allies. "So we support Ukraine. We provide absolute security guarantees for NATO Allies. And we demonstrate that commitment by increasing the presence in the Eastern part of the Alliance," added Jens Stoltenberg.

"Peace in our continent has been shattered. We now have war in Europe, on a scale and of a type we thought belong to history. We have just finished an emergency meeting of the North Atlantic Council to discuss the situation. The Council also addressed the request by Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia to hold urgent consultations under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty," explain the Secretary General of NATO. And added: "This is a grave moment for the security of Europe."

"With air and missile attacks. Ground forces and special forces from multiple directions. Targeting military infrastructure and major urban centres. This is a deliberate, cold-blooded and long-planned invasion," said Jens Stoltenberg. "Despite its litany of lies, denials, and disinformation, the Kremlin's intentions are clear for the world to see. Russia's leaders bear full responsibility for their reckless actions and the lives lost," he added.

Allies "call on Russia to immediately cease its military action. Withdraw its forces from Ukraine. And choose diplomacy. We fully support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And Ukraine's right of self-defence. Russia is using force to try to rewrite history. And deny Ukraine its free and independent path."

In the last weeks, NATO have deployed thousands of more troops to the eastern part of the Alliance and placed more on standby. Allies have over 100 jets at high alert, protecting the NATO airspace. And more than 120 allied ships at sea, from the High North to the Mediterranean.

Previously, the Allies had issued a statement condemning "in the strongest possible terms Russia's horrifying attack on Ukraine, which is entirely unjustified and unprovoked. Our thoughts are with all those killed and injured, and with the people of Ukraine. We also condemn Belarus for enabling this attack. This renewed attack is a grave violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and is wholly contradictory to Russia's commitments in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris, the Budapest Memorandum and the NATO-Russia Founding Act. It constitutes an act of aggression against an independent peaceful country."

"We stand with the people of Ukraine and its legitimate, democratically elected president, parliament and government. We will always maintain our full support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters. We call on Russia to immediately cease its military action and withdraw all its forces from in and around Ukraine, to fully respect international humanitarian law, and to allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access and assistance to all persons in need," said the Allies.

"We strongly condemn Russia's decision to extend recognition to the separatist regions of eastern Ukraine. This further violates Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and contravenes the Minsk agreements, to which Russia is a signatory. Allies will never accept this illegal recognition," they warns. "We urge Russia in the strongest terms to turn back from the path of violence and

aggression it has chosen. Russia's leaders must bear full responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Russia will pay a very heavy economic and political price." Russia's actions "pose a serious threat to Euro-Atlantic security, and they will have geostrategic consequences.

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