

# Readiness, Resilience and Resources – the Key Components of Enablement

Jens Stoltenberg

**Our world is more complex and unpredictable than ever before. From Russia's aggressive military and hybrid activities, to China's increasingly assertive behaviour; and from brutal terrorist attacks and sophisticated cyber incidents, to extreme weather conditions, our security landscape is fraught with global challenges. To best prepare our Alliance for the unexpected, now and in the future, and ensure we can continue to defend any Ally against any threat at any time, NATO leaders took important decisions at our Summit in Brussels on 14 June. One of these, as stated in the Summit Communiqué, is to 'improve our ability to support the deployment and sustainment of Allied forces into, across and from the entire Alliance territory'. This is the essence of NATO's enablement work. It is about preparing the environment for our armed forces, enabling them to keep our one billion citizens safe.**

To maintain our security, our militaries must be ready to move rapidly and be able to sustain their activities wherever needed – in operations, training and exercises. NATO works hard to increase readiness and facilitate military mobility, as key pillars of a credible deterrence and defense. The NATO Readiness Initiative, agreed in 2018, allows us to respond at short notice to new security challenges and to reinforce national forces on land, at sea and in the air. Our two new NATO commands – Joint Force Command Norfolk in the United States, and Joint Support and Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany – are now operational. They contribute, respectively, to protecting sea-lanes between Europe and North America, and facilitating movement of allied armour and infantry across European borders.

We are also working more closely than ever before with the European Union to improve transport, infrastructure, and regulatory aspects of military mobility, enabling troops to move across Europe. As a key entry and transit country in Europe, the Netherlands is leading the way. Its national military mobility plan commits the Netherlands to establish corridors and logistics hubs to ensure the smooth and swift movement of forces and equipment

into and across its territory. This is in the security interest not only of the Netherlands, but of Europe and NATO as a whole.

This year, NATO tested its readiness and military mobility through exercise *Steadfast Defender* – our biggest exercise of 2021, with 20 ships, 60 aircraft, 500 vehicles and over 9,000 personnel from 20 Allies and our partners, Finland and Sweden. Forces and equipment successfully deployed across land and sea, from Spain to Romania and from the United States to Portugal. I personally joined this exercise off the coast of Lisbon, aboard a British aircraft carrier, carrying US marines, protected by a Dutch frigate – a perfect demonstration of Europe and North America working together to protect all Allies against any threat.

Enablement also requires our critical infrastructure and supply chains to be more resilient. To move forces and heavy military equipment, we need bridges to be solid; roads, railways and waterways to be accessible; telecommunication networks to be reliable; and supply chains to be safe. So strengthening resilience was another priority at the NATO Summit. Leaders committed to intensify



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (photo: NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

ing efforts to achieve NATO's baseline requirements for national resilience – including resilient energy, food and water supplies, transport, and civil communication systems. They also agreed to take a broader and more coordinated approach to resilience with the aim to reduce vulnerabilities and ensure our militaries can effectively operate in peace, crisis and conflict. NATO will develop alliance-wide objectives to guide national resilience goals and implementation plans.

Enhancing our resilience and our ability to move forces and military equipment is no easy task, and not one that the military can do alone. It requires a whole-of-government approach, with the cooperation of civil and military actors across a range of fields. It also requires engagement from the commercial sector, which provides a significant part of the capabilities needed to move and sustain military forces, such as railways and airports. To fulfil their missions, military forces depend on the civilian and commercial sectors for 90% of their transport, 85% of their basic supplies such as food and water, and 70% of their communications. Finally, enablement requires financial resources. The deployment and sustainment of our armed forces, as well as the building and maintenance

of robust critical infrastructure and safe supply chains, do not come for free. Yet they underpin our ability to preserve peace, so we must continue to invest in them as part of our broader investments in common defense and security. NATO Allies are on the right track, and this will be the seventh consecutive year of increased defense spending across European Allies and Canada. Moreover, NATO leaders agreed at the Summit to continue to invest more and better together, across all three NATO budgets: military, civil and infrastructure. This is crucial for NATO's preparedness as we face a more challenging security environment.

As we look ahead to the next NATO Summit in Spain in 2022, NATO will continue to focus on enabling our forces. For this, greater readiness, enhanced resilience and increased resources are key to keep our nations safe, now and in the future.

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