



NATO To Increase High-Readiness Force To Over 300,000 Troops

Description

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced Monday that the alliance will increase its high-readiness force from 40,000 troops to over 300,000 as part of a plan he called “the biggest overhaul of our collective defense and deterrence since the Cold War.”

The NATO Response Force was formed in 2003 and was first activated in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The entire force wasn’t deployed, but several thousand troops from the US and other NATO countries were sent to Eastern Europe as part of the Response Force.

The US currently has over 100,000 troops stationed in Europe for the first time since 2005 as a result of NATO boosting its forces on what it calls its “eastern flank.” Stoltenberg outlined plans to make the reinforcement more permanent that will be officially announced at the upcoming NATO summit in Madrid, which starts Tuesday.

“At the Summit, we will strengthen our forward defenses,” Stoltenberg said. “We will enhance our battlegroups in the eastern part of the alliance up to brigade levels.” Brigade levels would bring NATO’s battle groups to about 3,000 to 5,000 troops, which is the type of increase the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia are hoping to see.

According to a NATO fact sheet from 2021, there are about 4,615 NATO troops spread across the four battlegroups that are currently deployed across Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Stoltenberg announced back in March that the alliance will deploy new battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

Stoltenberg said Monday that NATO will also bolster its forces with “more pre-positioned equipment, and stockpiles of military supplies, more forward-deployed capabilities, like air defense, strengthened command and control, and upgraded defense plans, with forces pre-assigned to defend specific allies.”

While a major increase in NATO’s presence in Eastern Europe is expected, NATO members are at odds over where exactly to place troops, issues that will be worked out at the Madrid summit.

Another issue to be discussed is Sweden and Finland's potential membership, which has been blocked by Turkey over the Nordic nations' alleged ties with Kurdish militant groups. NATO is also set to release its new Strategic Concept document that will mention China by name for the first time as the alliance has its eyes on expanding into the Asia Pacific.

Stoltenberg has repeatedly stated that NATO members should be ready to support Ukraine in its war against Russia for a long time. He said at the upcoming summit, NATO allies will agree on more military aid for Kyiv and that the "longer-term" goal is to "help Ukraine transition from Soviet-era military equipment, to modern NATO equipment."

As the US and other NATO members are flooding Ukraine with billions of dollars in weapons and NATO is expanding its presence in Eastern Europe, the risk of nuclear war is at its greatest height since the end of the Cold War. But the risk doesn't appear to be factored into the US response to the war in Ukraine as Washington has abandoned diplomacy with Moscow and continues to escalate in every way possible short of sending troops to fight Russia.

by Dave DeCamp

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