



The Secretary General's
Annual Report

2023

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FOREWORD



Thirty-one national flags fly at NATO Headquarters after Finland's accession to the Alliance. Brussels, Belgium, April 2023.



Press conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Kyiv, Ukraine, April 2023.

The most important lesson from the war in Ukraine is that North America and Europe must stand together. In a more dangerous world, we need our transatlantic Alliance more than ever. Without NATO, there is no security in Europe.

Opening remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg
at the Munich Security Conference. Munich, Germany, 18 February 2023.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine rages on, there is a new war in the Middle East, and Allies face greater competition from authoritarian states, including China. In addition, we still face a range of other threats to our security, including terrorism, cyber attacks and climate change. The world has become more dangerous, but NATO is stronger.

In 2023, NATO grew bigger and more capable. Finland became a NATO Ally, and we have just welcomed Sweden as well. We continued to strengthen our defences. At our Summit in Vilnius, we agreed robust new plans to defend every inch of Alliance territory. These plans are backed by hundreds of thousands of troops and highly capable air and naval forces at a high state of readiness – and with eight battlegroups on our eastern flank, stretching from the Baltic to the Mediterranean Sea, scalable to brigade size.

In 2023, defence spending increased by an unprecedented 11% across Europe and Canada. Since we agreed the Defence Investment Pledge in 2014, European Allies and Canada will have spent more than USD 600 billion extra on defence. In 2024, we expect two-thirds of Allies to meet or exceed the target of investing 2% of Gross Domestic Product in defence. At the Vilnius Summit, we agreed the Defence Production Action Plan, to ramp up production and replenish our stocks of weapons and ammunition. Billions of dollars of contracts have already been signed with defence industry. This will mean more security for Allies, more supplies for Ukraine, and more highly skilled jobs across Europe and North America.

In addition to strengthening our own collective defence, NATO continues to support Ukraine. Ukraine must prevail as an independent, sovereign

nation. If Putin wins, this would send a dangerous message to authoritarian leaders around the world that they can achieve their objectives through war and violence. Supporting Ukraine is not charity, it is in our own security interest.

At the Vilnius Summit, we brought Ukraine closer to NATO than ever before. We established the NATO-Ukraine Council where we meet to discuss and take decisions on our common security interests, as equals. We are helping to transition Ukraine from Soviet-era to NATO equipment and standards. We have also removed the requirement for a Membership Action Plan, significantly shortening Ukraine's path to membership. All Allies agree that Ukraine will become a member of NATO.

China is watching our actions closely. China does not share our values, it challenges our interests, and Beijing is increasingly aligned with Moscow. We will continue to trade and engage with China, but we must manage the risks and prepare for enduring competition.

NATO is a regional alliance that faces global challenges, so our partnerships around the world are essential for our security. We continue to work closely with the European Union on a wide range of security issues. We are also deepening our

cooperation with our partners in the Indo-Pacific – Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea – and I have appointed a group of experts to review NATO's approach to our southern neighbourhood.

2024 marks the 75th anniversary of the NATO Alliance. In all those years, the bond between Europe and North America has kept our nations secure and our people safe. At the Washington Summit in July, we will send a powerful message of unity, solidarity and resolve – to prevent war and preserve peace.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jens Stoltenberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jens Stoltenberg
NATO Secretary General

NATO AT A GLANCE



Meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission involving NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană and Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine Olha Stefanishyna. Brussels, Belgium, June 2023.

Why NATO Was Founded

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in 1949 in the aftermath of the Second World War. Its purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by military and non-military means. The principle of collective defence is central to NATO's founding document – the North Atlantic Treaty. This principle, enshrined in Article 5 of the Treaty, binds NATO Allies together, declaring an armed attack against any one of them 'an attack against them all'. NATO strives to secure a lasting peace in Europe, based on common values of democracy, individual liberty, human rights and the rule of law.

NATO Member States

In 2023, NATO's Allies represent one billion people and roughly half the world's economic and military might. Together, NATO Allies are stronger and safer together than they would be alone.

Twelve founding members signed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Treaty also allows for other European countries to join the Alliance, if all existing Allies agree. Any prospective member is required to share NATO's core values and have the capacity and willingness to contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Since 1949, a further 20 countries have joined NATO: Greece and Türkiye (1952), Germany (1955), Spain (1982), Czechia, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), North Macedonia (2020), Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024).

In 2022, Finland and Sweden submitted official letters of application to become NATO Allies. In July of that year, after completing accession talks, NATO Allies signed the Accession Protocols for both countries, which then became Invitees with the right to attend NATO meetings. After Allies had ratified Finland's Accession Protocol according to their national procedures, Finland became NATO's 31st member country in April 2023. At the time of printing, the accession process for Sweden was also complete.

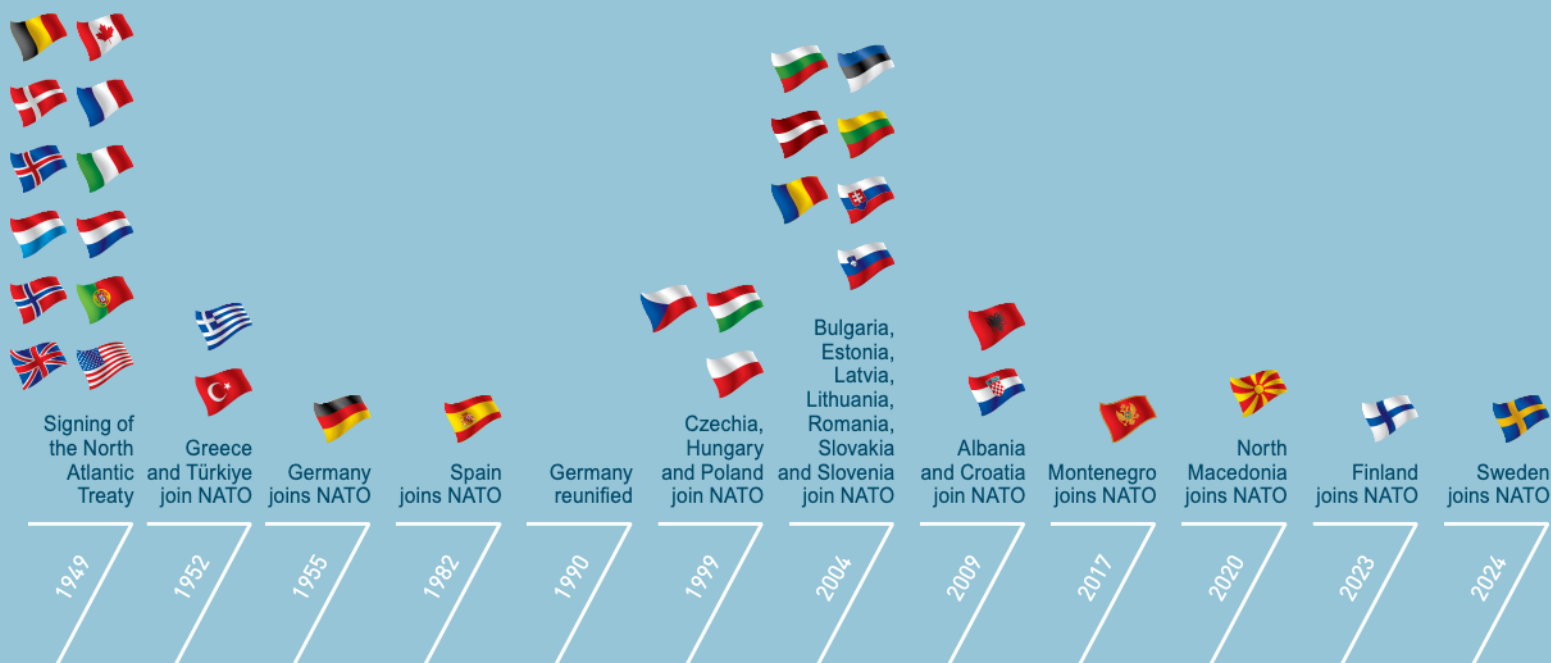
NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept

Alongside the North Atlantic Treaty, the Strategic Concept is NATO's second most important guiding document. It reaffirms NATO's values and purpose, and provides an overall assessment of the security environment. It also shapes and drives NATO's strategic adaptation and its future political and military development. NATO Leaders endorsed the current Strategic Concept – which will guide the Alliance through the next decade and beyond – at the 2022 Madrid Summit.

The 2022 Strategic Concept recognises that the Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace, stating instead that the Alliance's security environment is characterised by strategic competition, pervasive instability and recurrent shocks. Russia and terrorism represent the two main threats to Allied security. The Strategic Concept also recognises that the People's Republic of China's (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge Allied interests, security and values, and it further identifies a number of security challenges that the Alliance needs to tackle, including responding to climate change as a defining challenge of our time with profound impacts on Allied security.

The Strategic Concept establishes three core tasks for NATO: deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security. These tasks are essential and complementary to ensure NATO can fulfil its main purpose: to ensure the collective defence and security of all Allies.

The Concept reiterates that the transatlantic bond between Allied countries from Europe and North America remains key to Allied security. NATO is the unique, essential and indispensable transatlantic forum for consulting, coordinating and acting on all matters related to Allied individual and collective security.





For Those Who Serve

NATO's ambitions, clearly expressed in the North Atlantic Treaty, are simple: 'to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of [its] peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law'.

Achieving that mission since the signing of the Treaty in 1949 has required immense hard work and sacrifice.

In 2023, the security and freedom of NATO's one billion citizens continued to rely on the endeavours of the Alliance's soldiers, sailors and aircrew. Their willingness to put themselves in harm's way on our behalf, day after day, is an extraordinary gift. Whether it is patrolling the North Atlantic Ocean, NATO's land borders or the skies over the Alliance's eastern flank, their skill and professionalism make peace and security possible.

There can be no security without strong defences. And no strong defences without capable armed forces.

As we prepare for the Alliance's 75th anniversary, and at a time of great change, the men and women of our armed forces are what allow us to look to the future with confidence. Without them, there would be no NATO.

We thank them and honour them.

Flight Surgeon Samantha M. of the German Air Force during exercise Rapid Viking 2023. Iceland, August 2023.



A Finnish soldier during exercise Northern Forest, Northern Finland, May 2023.



NATO IN 2023

ADAPTING AT A CRITICAL TIME

VILNIUS
SUMMIT | SOMMET

11-12 VII 2023



Official family portrait of NATO's Heads of State and Government at the Vilnius Summit. Vilnius, Lithuania, July 2023.

We will not let authoritarian states break down the rules-based international order. We will support Ukraine for as long as it takes. And we will not let terrorists crush our free and open societies. We will stand united to protect our values and our people.

Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the ceremony at the Memorial for the 22 July 2011 Acts of Terrorism. Oslo, Norway, 31 May 2023.

2023 was a challenging but successful year for the Alliance. NATO welcomed its 31st Ally, Finland, and took important decisions to strengthen the Alliance's collective defence and adapt to the new security reality.

In 2023, Moscow continued its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine, bringing violence and death to the heart of Europe while, at the same time, seeking to divide NATO. In doing so, it underestimated both the determination of the people of Ukraine and Allied unity. Ukraine has steadfastly defended its population, and liberated more than half of the territory occupied by Russia in the early stages of the war.

Throughout 2023, Allies have been unwavering in their solidarity with Ukraine. Together with the majority of members of the United Nations, they remain fully committed to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. During his visits to Kyiv in April and September, the Secretary General agreed on the importance of a just and sustainable peace, and reaffirmed that NATO stands with Ukraine, now and for the long term. NATO has continued to support Ukraine's right to self-defence and brought Ukraine closer to NATO, with strengthened political relations and enhanced practical support.

Shattered Peace: Responding to Russia's Aggression

NATO tried to build a partnership with Russia for decades. Over the past decade, however, Russia has continuously violated the norms and principles that have contributed to a stable and predictable European security order. Russia's brutal and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, launched in February 2022, has shattered the hard-earned peace in Europe.

As NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept makes clear, the Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security, and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia seeks to establish spheres of influence and direct control through coercion, subversion, aggression and annexation. It uses conventional, cyber and hybrid means against NATO and its partners. Its coercive military posture, rhetoric and proven willingness to use force to pursue its political goals undermine the rules-based international order. The Russian Federation is modernising its nuclear forces and expanding its novel and disruptive dual-capable delivery systems, while employing coercive nuclear signalling. It aims to destabilise countries to our East and South. In the High North, its capability to disrupt Allied reinforcements and freedom of navigation across the North Atlantic is a strategic challenge to the Alliance. Moscow's military build-up, including in the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Sea regions, along with its military integration with Belarus, challenge the Alliance's security and interests.

In light of its hostile policies and actions, NATO cannot consider Russia to be a partner. Any change in the relationship depends on Russia halting its aggressive behaviour and fully complying with international law. NATO remains willing to keep open channels of communication with Moscow to manage and mitigate risks, prevent escalation and increase transparency. NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia.

At the Vilnius Summit in July, Allies agreed to continue to consult on and assess the implications of Russia's policies and actions for Allied security, and respond to Russian threats and hostile actions in a united and responsible way.

The Vilnius Summit: An Enduring Bond

On 11-12 July 2023, NATO Leaders gathered in Vilnius, Lithuania to take important decisions on the Alliance's future – including how best to continue NATO's adaptation to the new security environment. In doing so, they built on the historic decisions taken a year earlier at the NATO Summit in Madrid.

NATO Leaders took major steps to strengthen Allied deterrence and defence; enhance resilience and protect critical infrastructure; adapt to emerging security challenges; and reinforce cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific region.

Stronger, Safer: The Alliance's Deterrence and Defence

At the Vilnius Summit, Allied Leaders agreed to implement the largest reinforcement of collective defence in a generation, enhancing NATO's ability to defend all Allies in every domain: land, maritime, air, cyberspace and space. Given major changes to NATO's security environment in recent years – and the Alliance's renewed focus on deterrence and defence – Allies agreed to an updated and strengthened set of regional defence plans.

To execute the plans – the most comprehensive since the end of the Cold War – Allies are transforming the NATO Response Force and increasing the number



NATO's relevance to global security skyrocketed in 2023. Our team helped ramp up support to Ukraine, implement new defence plans, safeguard security in the Balkans and enhance our response to terrorism.

Tom Goffus (United States)

Assistant Secretary General,
Operations Division
NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

of high-readiness forces to well over 300,000. NATO is also boosting its ability to reinforce its forces, including with more pre-positioned equipment, more forward-deployed capabilities such as air defence, and strengthened command and control.

NATO is ready, willing and able to defend every inch of Allied territory. To that end, NATO Leaders agreed to strengthen the NATO Command Structure to ensure that it is sufficiently agile, resilient and well-staffed to execute its new defence plans.

A soldier of the US Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment cleans his rifle during exercise Griffin Shock. Bemowo Piskie, Poland, May 2023.



Leaders also agreed a new Defence Investment Pledge, making an enduring commitment to investing at least 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually in defence, and affirming that in many cases expenditure beyond 2% of GDP will be needed in order to remedy existing shortfalls and respond to a more contested security order.

Leaders also endorsed a new Defence Production Action Plan to accelerate joint procurement, boost production capacity, and increase Allied interoperability. Allies are further increasing their stockpiles of munitions and equipment and repositioning them, informed by the longstanding NATO Defence Planning Process, and in turn providing industry with the long-term certainty it needs to be able to boost production.

Boosting Support for Ukraine

Elevating Political Dialogue with Kyiv

Allied Leaders took landmark decisions at the Vilnius Summit to strengthen political and practical support for Ukraine. Leaders reaffirmed that the security of Ukraine is of great importance to Allies: a strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. The full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine that Russia launched on 24 February 2022 represents the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades.

In full support of Ukraine's right to choose its own security arrangements, Allied Heads of State and Government stated that Ukraine's future is in NATO.



In 2023, I contributed to the development of the Defence Production Action Plan, subsequently endorsed at the Vilnius Summit. I'm proud to have been involved in this important and enduring project.

Béatrice Lurquin (Belgium)

Officer, Policy, Plans and Partnerships Section,
Defence Investment Division
NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

Ukraine has become increasingly interoperable and politically integrated with the Alliance, and has made substantial progress on reforms. Allies recognised that Ukraine's path to full Euro-Atlantic integration has moved beyond the need for the Membership Action Plan, and have therefore decided to waive this requirement, simplifying Kyiv's path to membership. In November, the Allies recommended priority reforms for Ukraine's adapted Annual National Programme. The Alliance is committed to supporting Ukraine in making these reforms on its path towards future membership and to regularly assessing progress. Allies will be in a position to

President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Rishi Sunak and President of the United States Joe Biden at the inaugural session of the NATO-Ukraine Council at the Vilnius Summit. Vilnius, Lithuania, July 2023.





Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Philippe Lavigne with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Ukraine's Minister of Defence Rustem Umerov on the sidelines of the NATO-Ukraine Council at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, October 2023.

extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when they agree and conditions are met.

Allies and Ukraine have established the NATO-Ukraine Council, a new joint body where Allies and Ukraine sit as equal members to advance political dialogue, cooperation, and Ukraine's membership aspirations. Its crisis consultation mechanism was first invoked in July, when Russia unilaterally withdrew from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and launched missile strikes aimed at stopping Ukraine's agricultural exports, on which hundreds of millions of people worldwide depend. The NATO-Ukraine Council became fully operational in the second half of 2023, with Defence and Foreign Ministers meeting in the new format, and with the establishment of a committee structure to support dialogue and joint action in areas such as

Euro-Atlantic security, defence capacity building, interoperability, resilience, innovation and strategic communications.

Enhancing Practical Support

Heads of State and Government have directed NATO to assist Ukraine by expanding NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine into a multi-year programme. This multi-year programme will continue to deliver on immediate assistance needs for the war in Ukraine, while undertaking longer-term projects designed to assist Ukraine with its post-war recovery. NATO has developed a long-term, multi-year strategy for the Comprehensive Assistance Package, leading to numerous projects to bolster the strength and resilience of Ukraine's defence and security sector.

These long-term projects are broadly focused along three lines of effort: recovery and reconstruction, institutional transformation, and transitioning Ukraine towards interoperability with NATO.



A Ukrainian soldier fires a rifle under the supervision of a Norwegian Army instructor. United Kingdom, April 2023.

The Package's multi-year work strands are developed based on input from Ukraine itself and have identified the following priorities:

- 1) Increasing interoperability;
- 2) Establishing a NATO-Ukraine Joint Allied Training and Education Centre;
- 3) Rebuilding damaged military infrastructure (including three training sites);
- 4) Demining Ukrainian territory and strengthening Ukraine's own demining capabilities;
- 5) Defence procurement reform;
- 6) Rehabilitation of injured veterans and reintegration of veterans into civilian life.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered a global security crisis. It's been an honour to contribute to NATO's support for Ukraine alongside my colleagues on the Comprehensive Assistance Package.

Dr Svitlana Kobzar (Belgium)

Officer, Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine, Operations Division
NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

NATO's Practical Support for Ukraine at a Glance

As Ukraine exercises its right to self-defence, enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, NATO Allies have provided unprecedented support.

Thanks to considerable financial support from Allies and partner countries, NATO has taken on a crucial role providing non-lethal assistance to Ukraine. This support takes the form of short-term material assistance and longer-term projects designed to rebuild the Ukrainian defence and security sector, helping Ukraine in its transition towards interoperability with NATO.

NATO has delivered assistance since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression. This support is typically based on urgent requirements identified by Ukraine, which are then communicated to NATO. In 2023, the Comprehensive Assistance Package and its Trust Fund coordinated the delivery of EUR 117 million in non-lethal material aid to Ukraine. An additional EUR 117 million worth of material aid is under contract and will be delivered to Ukraine in the near future.

Aid delivered in 2023 included fuel, medical kits, counter-drone systems, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protective equipment, Starlink systems, shelters, power generators and bridging systems. By repurposing the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, Allies and partners transferred around USD 24 million to the Comprehensive Assistance Package Trust Fund and provided Ukraine with EUR 10 million in-kind contributions of equipment, including clothing and medical supplies.

The Comprehensive Assistance Package also continued to coordinate NATO's medium- and long-term assistance to Ukraine. The medium- and long-term efforts – defined as requiring between two and five years for completion – support Ukraine's efforts to transform its defence and security sector, moving away from Soviet-era systems towards NATO standards. Projects are developed in close coordination with Ukraine, and implemented thanks to substantial financial and political support from Allies and partners.

Military Rehabilitation Centres

NATO, through its Comprehensive Assistance Package, in cooperation with the UK Ministry of Defence, has undertaken a project to establish medical rehabilitation centres across Ukraine. Through this project, a pre-war medical centre damaged during the hostilities was restored and transformed into a rehabilitation centre. In October, the first patients – all wounded veterans – were admitted for treatment. By the end of year, the centre was able to treat roughly 300 veterans at any one time. The next phase of the project involves identifying and upgrading four more sites as a step towards creating a nationwide network of rehabilitation centres – centres which will be able to train the next generation of doctors and surgeons, in turn helping to create a strong and sustainable military healthcare system.

NATO-Ukraine Innovation Cooperation

NATO and Ukraine have also made good progress on innovation. In May, NATO hosted the first NATO-Ukraine High-Level Innovation Dialogue with Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for Innovation, Education, Science and Technology Development. This event marked the beginning of a new phase of cooperation. In November, Allied Foreign Ministers agreed to establish innovation and emerging and disruptive technologies as one of the pillars of cooperation between NATO and Ukraine under the NATO-Ukraine Council.



Mykhailo Fedorov, Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine for Innovation, Education, Science and Technology Development, and David van Weel, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, at the launch of the NATO-Ukraine High-Level Innovation Dialogue. Brussels, Belgium, May 2023.

Preparing for a World of Strategic Competition

At the Vilnius Summit, Allies also took steps to continue preparing NATO for a world of rising strategic competition. In order to boost resilience, Allies agreed the 2023 Alliance Resilience Objectives, building on the 2021 Strengthened Resilience Commitment. These new objectives are designed to strengthen NATO and Allied preparedness against strategic shocks and disruptions, boost the ability to ensure continuity of government and essential public services, and facilitate civil support to military operations. Allies will also use the objectives to shape their own national goals and implementation plans.

The threat to critical undersea infrastructure is real and developing. Subsea data and energy cables are potentially as vulnerable as they are vital. For that reason, Allied Leaders agreed to establish NATO's Maritime Centre for the Security of Critical Undersea

Infrastructure within NATO's Maritime Command in Northwood, United Kingdom. Leaders also agreed to set up a network that brings together NATO, Allies, the private sector and other relevant actors to improve information-sharing and exchange best practices. NATO continued to work closely with the European Union, through the NATO-EU Task Force on the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure.

The ability to detect, prevent and respond to malicious cyber activities is as important as ever – which is why Allies strengthened their commitment to NATO's Cyber Defence Pledge, with ambitious new goals to boost national cyber defences. They also launched NATO's new Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability to support national mitigation efforts in response to significant malicious cyber activities.

Addressing Cross-Regional Challenges in the Indo-Pacific and in NATO's Southern Neighbourhood

The Indo-Pacific remains an important focus for NATO; developments in the region can directly affect Euro-Atlantic security. Allies welcomed Heads of State and Government from NATO's four Indo-Pacific partners – Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea – to the Vilnius Summit. This was the second time they have participated in a NATO summit (after the 2022 Madrid Summit). The four partners share the Alliance's commitment to

international law and the rules-based international order, and make a significant contribution to security in the Euro-Atlantic area, including through their support to Ukraine. NATO pledged to further strengthen dialogue and cooperation with its partners in the Indo-Pacific, including on cyber defence, new technologies, maritime security, climate change and countering disinformation.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (centre) with the Heads of State and Government of NATO's partners from the Indo-Pacific region: from left to right, Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida, Prime Minister of New Zealand Christopher Hipkins, President of the Republic of Korea Suk Yeol Yoon. Vilnius, Lithuania, July 2023.



NATO and the People's Republic of China

NATO and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are not partners. The Alliance does not consider the PRC an adversary and remains open to constructive engagement.

NATO's Strategic Concept makes clear that Allies consider the PRC's stated ambitions and coercive policies a challenge to Allied interests, security and values. At the Vilnius Summit, NATO Leaders addressed the PRC's opaque military developments, technological advances, malicious cyber and hybrid activities, confrontational rhetoric and disinformation.

Allies are also aware of the potential security implications of supply-chain disruptions. As the war in Ukraine has demonstrated Allies' dangerous dependence on Russian gas, NATO is working to assess potential dependence on other assertive authoritarian regimes for sustaining NATO's supply chains, technology or infrastructure. Allies are working to reduce strategic vulnerabilities, and manage associated risks. NATO will continue to defend the rules-based order – a global system based on international law, norms and values, not force.

The Alliance is working to address challenges posed by the PRC to Euro-Atlantic security. In line with the Strategic Concept, Allies are boosting their shared awareness, enhancing their resilience and preparedness, and protecting against the PRC's coercive tactics and efforts to divide the Alliance. The deepening strategic partnership between the PRC and Russia remains concerning and runs counter to Allied values and interests. The Alliance has continued to call on the PRC to play a constructive role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, to condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, to abstain from supporting Russia's war effort in any way, to cease amplifying Russia's false narrative blaming Ukraine and NATO for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and to adhere to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In 2023, NATO continued to engage with the PRC, including through a meeting between the Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, and senior political and military officials from the PRC on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. A number of exchanges also took place between officials on subjects such as arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, and Russia's war against Ukraine.

In Vilnius, NATO Leaders also addressed threats and challenges from the Alliance's southern neighbourhood, including the Middle East and North Africa and the Sahel regions. Insecurity in these regions has a direct impact on the security of all Allies, too often allowing the proliferation of terrorist groups and destabilising and coercive interference by strategic competitors. Allies launched a deep and

comprehensive reflection on existing and emerging threats and challenges in NATO's southern neighbourhood. An independent group of experts was established in October to analyse challenges and opportunities for engagements with NATO partners, international organisations and other relevant actors in the region.



DETERRENCE AND DEFENCE

PROTECTING OUR CITIZENS



Croatian Army Panzerhaubitze 2000 mobile artillery units open fire during exercise Griffin Shock 2023. Bemowo Piskie, Poland, May 2023.



Finnish artillery units fire howitzers during exercise Northern Forest. Rovajärvi, Finland, May 2023

There should be no doubt that NATO is ready, willing and able to defend every inch of Allied territory.

Joint press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with President of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs. Brussels, Belgium, 16 November 2023

A New Era of Collective Defence

NATO is modernising for a new era of collective defence – and continuing to build on steps taken following Russia’s illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea in 2014. Since 2020, adaptation has been guided by the implementation of two major military concepts: the Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area, focusing on the present; and the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept, offering a guide over the long term. Following the onset of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine in 2022, the Alliance has further accelerated the adaptation of its deterrence and defence posture.

At the 2022 Madrid Summit, and with the adoption of the 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO set a new baseline for its deterrence and defence posture in line with its 360-degree approach, across the land, air, maritime, cyberspace and space domains, and against all threats and challenges.

One of the most visible decisions from Madrid was Allies’ commitment to deploying additional robust,



2023 was a landmark year for modernising NATO’s plans, capabilities and command structures, and agreeing objectives for resilience. I feel privileged to have played my part in building a more robust Alliance.

Jörg See (Germany)

Deputy Assistant Secretary General,
Defence Policy and Planning Division
NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

in-place and combat-ready forces to NATO's eastern flank. In 2023, Allies continued delivering on this commitment. There are now eight fully operational multinational battlegroups in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. These battlegroups are working closely with forces in their respective host nations and are supported by an ambitious exercise programme focused on large-scale collective defence scenarios. Allies have shown they can rapidly reinforce these battlegroups up to brigade level, clearly demonstrating that NATO is ready, willing and able to defend every inch of Allied territory.

At the Vilnius Summit, NATO Leaders agreed additional significant measures to further enhance NATO's deterrence and defence posture in all domains, including by strengthening forward defences and the Alliance's ability to rapidly reinforce any Ally. These decisions included agreeing on a new generation of regional defence plans that significantly improve NATO's ability and readiness to deter and defend against any threats, including at short or no notice.

The New 'Family' of Plans

NATO has always had defence plans in place to deter threats and defend Allies. Given changes in the security environment – and a renewed focus on deterrence and defence – the Supreme Allied Commander Europe has created a new 'family' of collective defence plans. These include a strategic plan for the defence of the Alliance, as well as domain-specific and regional military plans.

The regional plans NATO Leaders agreed at the 2023 Vilnius Summit are the most comprehensive and detailed since the Cold War. These plans direct how NATO will deter and defend against both Russia and terrorist groups, explaining how, in the event of a crisis, Allied forces would respond faster and at a greater scale.

There are three regional plans: one for the North, the Atlantic and the European Arctic; one for the centre, covering the Baltic region and central Europe; and a southern plan for the Mediterranean and Black Sea region. This new generation of regional defence plans aims to significantly improve the coherence of NATO's collective planning with Allies' national planning of their forces,

posture, capabilities, and command and control. The plans also ensure that Allies can deliver the right forces at the right time in the right places.



Deterrence and defence of NATO territory is what Allied Command Operations does every day. It is also the most important thing we do. The new 'family' of plans represents the next level of planning for defence against threats in a post-Cold War era.

**Maj Gen Matthew Van Wagenen
(United States)**

Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations,
Allied Command Operations

Supreme Headquarters
Allied Powers Europe, Mons, Belgium

NATO's Military Presence in the East of the Alliance

Symbols depicted on the map do not necessarily indicate geographical location. In 2023, Sweden was a NATO Invitee. It became an Ally in March 2024.

Forward Presence Battlegroups and Multinational Headquarters



8 Multinational Battlegroups (BG):

- Mission:** Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence
- Multinational BG Bulgaria.** Framework nation: Italy
- Multinational BG Estonia.** Framework nation: United Kingdom
- Multinational BG Hungary.** Framework nation: Hungary
- Multinational BG Latvia.** Framework nation: Canada
- Multinational BG Lithuania.** Framework nation: Germany
- Multinational BG Poland.** Framework nation: United States
- Multinational BG Romania.** Framework nation: France
- Multinational BG Slovakia.** Framework nation: Czechia

Multinational Headquarters (HQ):

- Mission:** Command and control of deployed NATO troops
- HQ Multinational Corps-NE.** Host nation: Poland
- HQ Multinational Division-North.** Host nation: Denmark, Latvia
- HQ Multinational Division-NE.** Host nation: Poland
- HQ Multinational Division-Centre.** Host nation: Hungary
- HQ Multinational Corps-South.** Host nation: Romania
- HQ Multinational Division-SE.** Host nation: Romania
- HQ Multinational Brigade-SE.** Host nation: Romania

Contributing nations:

Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom, United States

Tailored Forward Presence



- Mission:** Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence
- Location:** Bulgaria, Romania
- Contributors:** Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Türkiye

NATO Force Integration Units



- Mission:** Facilitating the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the eastern part of the Alliance, support collective defence planning and assist in coordinating training and exercises
- Location:** Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
- Contributors:** 27 Allies and partner nations

Air Defence



- Mission:** Strengthening NATO's air defences
- Location:** Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
- Contributors:** France, Italy, Spain

Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance



- Mission:** Supporting decision-makers with timely information and intelligence
- Contributors:** Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States, NATO (NATO Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force, AWACS aircraft)



AWACS Patrols



- Mission:** Patrolling the skies over eastern Europe for early detection of air threats
- Contributors:** France, Greece, Italy, Türkiye, United Kingdom, NATO AWACS aircraft

Air Policing



- Mission:** Protecting the airspace of the eastern flank of the Alliance
- Location:** Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania
- Contributors:** Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States

Carrier Strike Groups



- Mission:** Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence at sea and in the air
- Location:** The Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic, Mediterranean and North Seas
- Contributors:** France, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, United States

Amphibious Task Force



- Mission:** Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence at sea and on land
- Location:** The Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic, Mediterranean and North Seas
- Contributors:** France, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, United States



Minister of Defence of Germany Boris Pistorius, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda and Minister of Defence of Lithuania Arvydas Anušauska visit troops participating in exercise Griffin Storm 2023. Lithuania, June 2023.

Allies also agreed to continue implementing the NATO Force Model that has delivered a larger pool of dedicated combat-capable forces – including forces at high readiness – in support of the Alliance’s three core tasks. Following that decision, more forces have been available for the NATO Force Model, linking forces and capabilities directly to the new regional plans as well as in support of NATO’s 360-degree posture. The NATO Force Model also leverages in-place forces, including national home defence forces and multinational deployments.

As part of the NATO Force Model, Allies are establishing a new multinational and multi-domain Allied Reaction Force. The Allied Reaction Force is a high-readiness force, signalling Alliance solidarity and contributing to NATO’s posture in peacetime, crisis and conflict. It is a multi-domain force built around a light infantry brigade and maritime, air, special operations forces, cyber, space, logistics and strategic communications elements.



I was honoured last year to contribute to NATO’s work on posture, forces, and command and control – in turn, helping to strengthen the Alliance’s deterrence and defence.

Julien Kita (France)

Head, Defence Capabilities,
Defence Policy and Planning Division
NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium

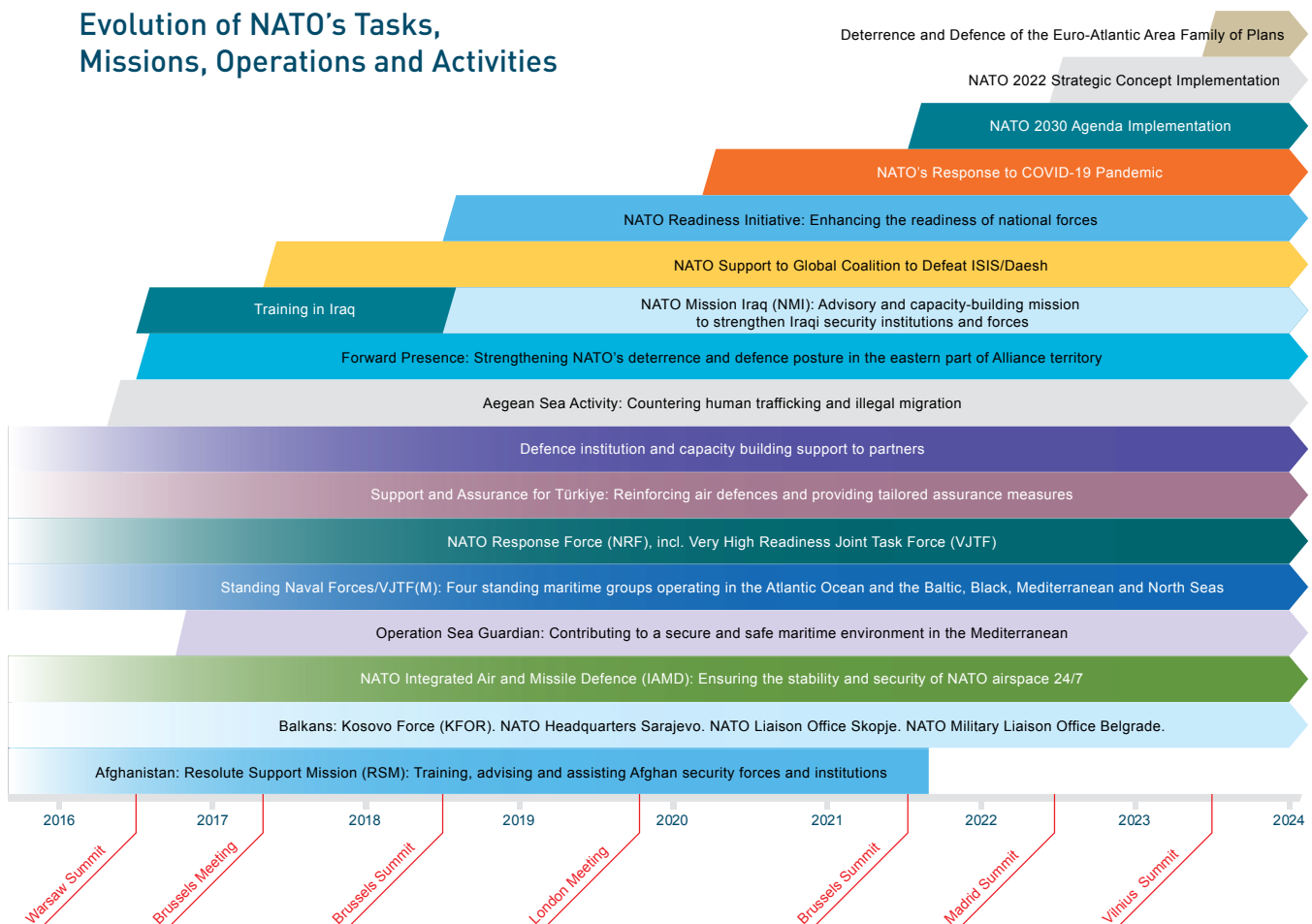
NATO's command and control is also being strengthened to ensure that it is sufficiently agile, resilient and staffed to execute agreed plans. Allies and NATO's military authorities have been working on revising NATO's command and control in its entirety, including the NATO Command Structure, the NATO Force Structure and national functions.

The adaptation of NATO's command and control aims to improve NATO's ability to conduct exercises, to manage NATO's posture in peacetime and in the transition to crisis and conflict, and to conduct the full spectrum of missions, including large-scale multi-domain operations for collective defence. NATO's strengthened command and control will include

three equally capable Joint Force Commands, located in Brunssum, the Netherlands; Naples, Italy; and Norfolk, Virginia, in the United States.

A credible Alliance deterrence and defence posture relies on the ability to deliver military reinforcements. In 2023, NATO Leaders decided to accelerate their efforts to improve a wide spectrum of functions – many of them logistics-related – across the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's Area of Responsibility. These include better reinforcement and sustainment of Allied forces into and across Alliance territory, including through the prepositioning of ammunition and equipment, and improved mobility.

Evolution of NATO's Tasks, Missions, Operations and Activities





German Air Force Eurofighter Typhoons conduct tactical manoeuvres during a training exercise. Skies over Germany, July 2023.

The Skies Above: Deterrence and Defence in the Air

NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence is a vital part of the Alliance's effort to deter and defend its territory, populations and forces against all air and missile threats and from all strategic directions. This mission takes place through peacetime, crisis and

conflict, and contributes to the Alliance's indivisible security and freedom of action, including NATO's ability to reinforce its territory.

NATO's Enhanced Air Policing in Response to Russian Drone Incursions

Established in 1961, the NATO Air Policing mission is a permanent peacetime task preserving the security of Allied airspace all year round and demonstrating Allied solidarity. NATO currently maintains five air policing missions – for Albania, the Baltic States, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Slovenia – as well as airborne surveillance and interception capabilities in Iceland. As part of broader assurance measures introduced following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, Allies provide additional assets to enhance the NATO Air Policing mission along NATO's eastern flank.

Following Russia's withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July, Russia began to attack Ukraine's grain and port infrastructure with missiles and drones. This included the targeting of infrastructure in the Danube region close to Romania's border. In September, drone debris was discovered just inside the Romanian border, with two further airspace violations by Russian drones soon afterwards.

These incidents were determined to be unintentional, but the increased risk posed by Russian air and missile activity near NATO's borders resulted in a decision to boost Allied vigilance in the region.

Following the original incident, the United States deployed additional F-16 fighter aircraft to Romania to enhance the NATO Air Policing mission. NATO also deployed two Airborne Warning and Control System surveillance planes to Lithuania, where they flew missions monitoring Russian military activity near the Alliance's borders.



A student pilot from the Belgian Air Force prepares to take off for a training sortie during the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program. Sheppard Air Force Base, United States, April 2023.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine demonstrated the crucial importance of air and missile defence. Allies have strengthened deployments of aircraft and surface-based air and missile defence units. They have enhanced air policing and vigilance activities, including air patrol missions on NATO's eastern flank. The Alliance maintains a high level of airborne alert and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance coverage.

Allies have also agreed to further improve the readiness, preparedness and interoperability of NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence through regular training and a rotational presence of modern air defence systems and capabilities across the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's Area of Responsibility, with an initial focus on the east of the Alliance.

NATO faces an increasingly complex air and missile threat environment as a result of the proliferation of air and missile capabilities, ranging from simple drones to sophisticated hypersonic missiles. The Alliance is closely monitoring developments by both state and non-state actors.

Hypersonic systems are one of nine key emerging and disruptive technologies identified by Allies. The Alliance conducts regular assessments of the threat

posed by hypersonic systems including observation of their use by Russia in Ukraine. NATO and Allies continue to work together to maintain awareness of developments in hypersonic missile technology and develop defences against these systems.

The threat to NATO's European populations, territory and forces posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles is also increasing. In response to this threat, Allies have reaffirmed their commitment to the full development of NATO Ballistic Missile Defence. This is designed to counter ballistic missiles emanating from outside the Euro-Atlantic area, especially from Iran. The aims of NATO Ballistic Missile Defence are purely defensive.

NATO Ballistic Missile Defence is based on voluntary national contributions, including nationally funded interceptors and sensors, and hosting arrangements. Command and control is commonly funded by all Allies. The United States remains a key contributor to NATO Ballistic Missile Defence through its European Phased Adaptive Approach. NATO Ballistic Missile Defence assets are currently located in Germany, Romania and Türkiye, with Spain hosting four Ballistic Missile Defence-capable ships, and the second Aegis Ashore site close to completion in Poland.



Allied flags at the signing of the operational memorandum of understanding marking the creation of the NATO Space Centre of Excellence. Paris, France, January 2023.

Above It All: Deterrence and Defence in Space

Space is an increasingly contested domain, marked by irresponsible behaviour by some actors, malicious activities, and the growth of counter-space capabilities by potential adversaries and strategic competitors to NATO. The information and services delivered via space are increasingly essential for the Alliance's prosperity and security. Satellites are critical, for instance, in helping to predict or assess the impact of natural disasters, facilitating financial transactions, providing Internet access and assessing the impact of climate change.

The Alliance is responding to this new reality. At the Vilnius Summit, NATO Leaders agreed to further integrate space into planning, exercising and executing multi-domain operations. Allies have also committed to enhancing the sharing of space data, products and services within NATO.

The NATO Space Centre at Allied Air Command in Ramstein, Germany, delivers regular analysis to support NATO's situational awareness and decision-making. NATO has also improved its space domain

awareness by integrating multiple national data feeds into a common space picture and deepening its relationship with Allies' national space centres.

Given the rapidly increasing role of the commercial sector in providing space data, products and services, NATO is taking steps to engage space companies in a strategic dialogue and increase its engagements with this vital sector.

At the Vilnius Summit, Allies underlined their commitment to upholding international law and supporting efforts to reduce space threats by promoting norms, rules and principles of responsible space behaviours. NATO Leaders also reaffirmed that hostile operations to, from or within space could reach the level of armed attack and could lead to the invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

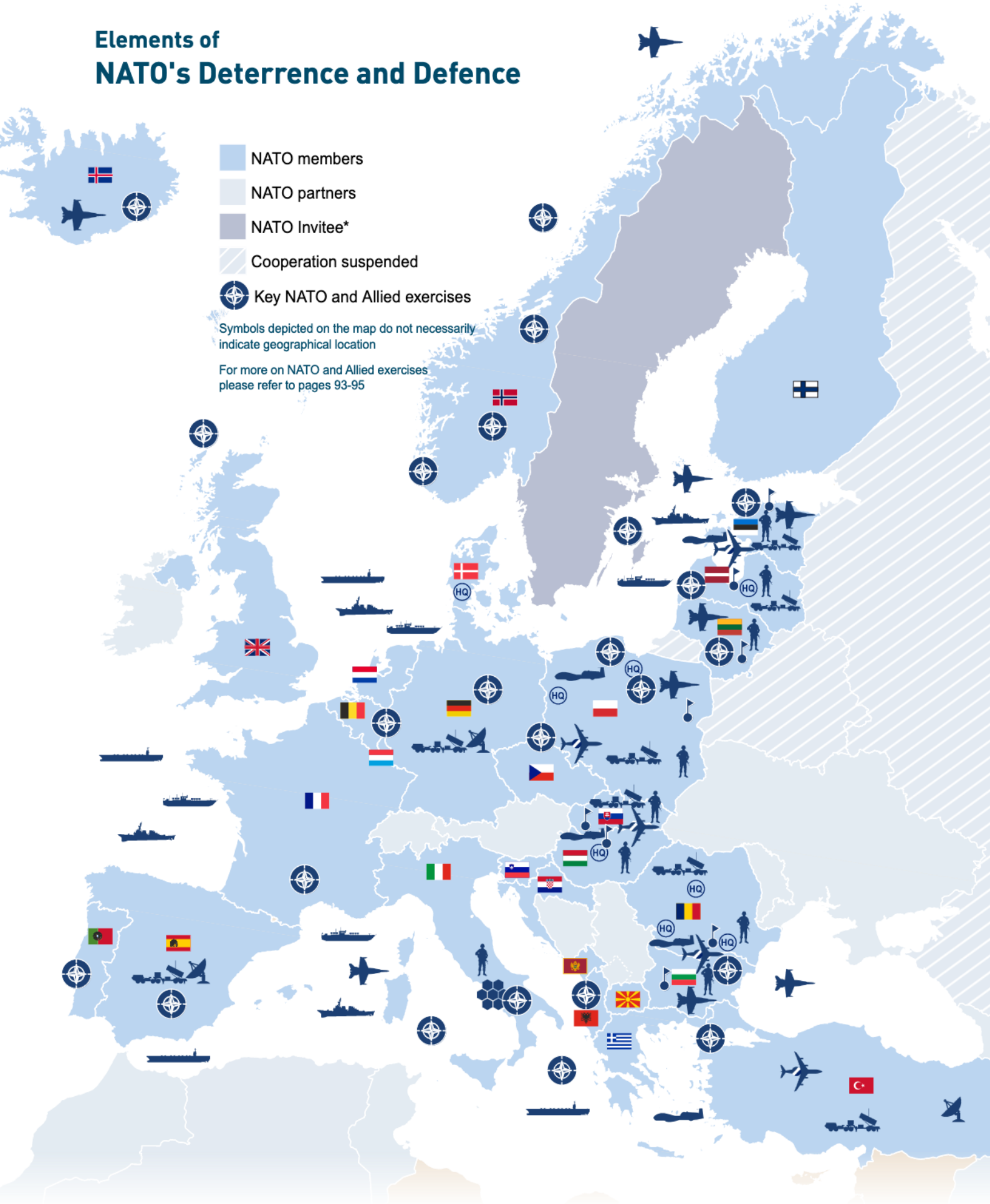
Elements of NATO's Deterrence and Defence

- NATO members
- NATO partners
- NATO Invitee*
- Cooperation suspended
- N

 Key NATO and Allied exercises

Symbols depicted on the map do not necessarily indicate geographical location

For more on NATO and Allied exercises please refer to pages 93-95



* Sweden became a NATO Ally in March 2024.