

NATO: Russia has broken international rules

Stoltenberg visit Madrid

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USPA NEWS - The Spanish prime minister, Mariano Rajoy received Thursday at the Moncloa Palace in Madrid, the new Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, in the round of queries the NATO representative is keeping some heads of State and Government allies after his inauguration on October 1, 2014.

During the meeting, she reviewed the commitments made at the last Summit of Wales and an analysis of the security situation in the Euro area, with special attention to the crisis in Ukraine, Libya and Middle East. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg underscored that NATO is responding to threats both to the east and the south. The Secretary General had an audience with His Majesty King Felipe VI. In a joint press conference following a meeting with Foreign Minister José Manuel García-Margallo, Stoltenberg called Spain "a staunch Ally," adding, "you do a lot for our shared security".

The Secretary General also thanked the important contributions of Spain to the Atlantic Alliance, with special emphasis on recent deployments in the Baltic countries and Turkey, as well as offering of Spain to lead the first Joint High Readiness Force NATO in 2016 and the burden that Spain established as host nation's largest military exercise in decades that NATO held in autumn on Spanish territory. He expressed gratitude for Spain's active role in NATO missions and operations, highlighting Spain's participation in Baltic air policing, its Patriot missile battery deployment in Turkey, and its hosting of missile defence ships at Naval Station Rota.

He noted that later in 2015, Spain will host NATO's biggest exercise in many years, expected to include around 25,000 troops. Mr. Stoltenberg also thanked Spain for its "major role in building security in Afghanistan". Stoltenberg warned that "Russia has broken international rules through its aggressive actions against Ukraine". He noted that "the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine seems to be holding, but it remains fragile". He added "we have seen the withdrawal of some heavy weapons, but they can be redeployed very fast". He called on all parties to ensure that OSCE monitors have the full access and security guarantees they need in order to verify the withdrawal. "This is vital for the full implementation of the Minsk agreement", he said.

Stoltenberg also highlighted security challenges to the south, including spreading instability across the Middle East and North Africa. He called ISIL "a direct threat to our security", saying "it is inspiring terrorist attacks on our streets". The Secretary General underscored the importance of working with partners to keep the southern neighbourhood stable, noting that NATO is advising Jordan on defence institution building. He added that NATO also stands ready "to support Libya with advice" in a similar way, and is assessing a request from Iraq. The Secretary General noted that by assisting neighbours, the Alliance "can project stability" without deploying its own forces.

"NATO is adapting to the challenges we face. We are more than doubling the size of the NATO Response Force from 13,000 to 30,000", the Secretary General said. He added that the Alliance is also creating a new 5,000-strong quick reaction Spearhead Force. Stoltenberg noted that in 2016, Spain will be the first Ally to lead the Spearhead Force. He called Spain's leadership "a strong signal of NATO solidarity" and proof that "Europeans are taking responsibility for their own security".

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com