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NATO Watch

conducts independent monitoring and analysis of NATO and aims to increase transparency, stimulate parliamentary engagement and broaden public awareness and participation in a progressive reform agenda within NATO.

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NATO Watch Essay:

NATO at 70: Will discord colour the celebrations in 2019?

In April 2019, NATO will celebrate its 70th anniversary with a meeting in Washington at the level of foreign ministers, and potentially another NATO Summit later in the year (with the date and location still to be decided). 2019 is also the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Despite these being major anniversaries, the gatherings are unlikely to be brimming with alliance conviviality. These are anxious times for transatlantic relations on a host of issues—see the top 10 potential flashpoints below—and the 2019 Washington meeting (or the subsequent Summit, if it happens) could be where this minefield of accrued policy differences finally explodes into the open. Despite the hugely embarrassing 2018 NATO summit, the alliance was able to put a lid on the major disagreements among its political leaders and even produced a detailed and lengthy policy communique. Whether NATO is able to continue to mask its political differences through alliance solidarity and norms at the operational or military and official working levels will be one of the key challenges in 2019.

NATO's top 10 potential flashpoints in 2019

1. President Trump and a possible European-US trade war

President Trump's nationalistic 'America first' agenda and 'shaking of the NATO tree' suggests that the much-lauded Transatlantic Bond may only be skin deep and close to breaking point. On the other hand, it is often difficult to discern to whom the President's heated words are actually targeted and

why, and there remains a broad commitment to NATO within the US establishment and military. Apportioning his rhetoric between demagoguery, distraction and personal offence is rarely easy, and it is also not clear if his views reflect a deeper chasm in the transatlantic relationship. The current US trade war with China, if unresolved, could escalate and provoke a resumption of the trade war with Europe (which fell into an uneasy truce in July last year). Another US-European trade war in 2019 could also have spillover effects for the transatlantic military alliance and stimulate efforts by Germany and France to finally create that elusive EU army.

2. The demise of the INF Treaty

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has warned Russia that it has one last chance of complying with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty after the United States threatened to withdraw from it in October. US President Donald Trump said he wanted to pull the country from the treaty but was persuaded by European allies in December to give Russia a 60-day grace period until mid-February to comply. Russia has rejected the accusations and complained about US missile defences in Europe that it says are in breach of the INF Treaty. The collapse of the INF Treaty in 2019 would mark the end of a very productive and successful era of arms control and could have especially severe implications for European security.

3. Russia and regional security in Eastern Europe

Russia and NATO relations have been getting worse for years and a further downward spiral can be expected in 2019. On the Russian side, President Putin is likely to continue to seek to exploit divisions within the transatlantic community (though asymmetrical responses, including efforts aimed at destabilising Western

governments), not least in an attempt to boost his faltering domestic standing. On the NATO side, a continued stiffening of US and NATO forces in Poland and the Baltic States seems likely, which will further raise tensions with Russia. In particular, if the United States decides to deploy permanent forces to Poland (as is currently under consideration), such a move would be a major strategic shift and another indication that senior US military leaders now view Russia as a military threat on par with China, rather than what it really is: a declining regional power.

4. Peace or more war in Afghanistan?

With the help of its NATO allies, the US launched a military campaign in Afghanistan 17 years ago to topple the Taliban government following the September 2001 attacks on the United States. The longest US war effort has since killed nearly 140,000 people, including security forces, insurgents and civilians, and has cost Washington close to a trillion dollars. However, 2019 brings a unique opportunity for peace in Afghanistan. With the United States planning to pull out almost half of the 14,000-strong force currently deployed, the intensification of moves towards peace negotiations in Afghanistan take on even more importance. However, success or failure of the peace talks remains in the balance.

5. Militarisation of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov

Further clashes between Ukraine and Russia in an increasingly militarised Sea of Azov and in the Kerch Strait seem likely in 2019. Russia is proposing to build up its naval resources adding 50 military and patrol ships to its Azov fleet and at least one modernized large missile boat and 17 new warships to its Black Sea fleet. NATO's response in the Black Sea will be restricted by the differing interests and approaches of

its three member states (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey) that are part of the seven Black Sea Basin countries, as well as the reactions of wider alliance members to developments in Ukraine's domestic politics. Turkey's control of the Bosphorus Straits and the Dardanelles, and limits on the transit of foreign warships, suggest that Russia will retain the upper hand in the Black Sea.

6. The Middle East: A congruence of fault lines

The Middle East is steeped in security dilemmas, including ongoing efforts to wind down the war in Syria, Saudi-Iranian and US-Iranian rivalry, policies and rivalries of other external actors (both regional and global), especially in Syria, the war in Yemen, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the waning of the two core Jihadist groups, Islamic State and al-Qaeda. NATO remains largely on the periphery, with a Canadian-led training mission in Iraq and two partnership programmes in the region. US President Trump's decision in mid-December to remove his forces from Syria, should it happen (and indications are that it might be a qualified and partial withdrawal) may well change the delicate balance of forces in the region and lead to further conflict involving Turkey, its Syrian allies, Syrian Kurds and the Assad regime. It might also breathe new life into the Islamic State, which thrives on such chaos. With at least four major NATO member states involved in the region, as well as Russia, NATO may well be dragged into deeper engagements in the Southern Flank in 2019.

7. Brexit and NATO

Will 2019 be the year of Brexit, and if so, is NATO prepared for the fallout? A no deal withdrawal from the EU will further strain relations with European allies and this could potentially spillover into NATO. Even if a deal is agreed (which currently seems

unlikely), the political, economic and bureaucratic burden of disentangling the UK from the EU and of launching numerous new trade agreements will continue to be a huge distraction and absorb vast resources—as are parallel moves to rebuild British grandeur as a leading global power by ‘pivoting’ to Asia. It is unlikely that Britain’s defence spending can match such aspirations, which may nonetheless have potentially destabilising consequences in east Asia and for NATO.

8. Political change in Europe?

The political make-up of Europe may change dramatically in 2019, with parliamentary or presidential elections in Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and the Ukraine. If the recent rise of nationalist-populist politicians in Europe and the United States is repeated in some of these elections, there is a real danger of NATO becoming dominated by a handful of illiberal leaders. Democratic governance and strong institutions are as much a keystone of NATO as is collective defence. Hence, any significant democratic regression within the alliance could permanently weaken it and open up opportunities for Russian interference.

9. Turkey’s missile system and a pivot to Russia?

Turkey’s planned acquisition of the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia (at a reported cost of \$2.5 billion) will continue to strain an already tense relationship with the United States. According to Turkish officials it is a done deal with delivery expected in the summer of 2019. However, because of concerns that the Russian system could pose security risks if integrated with NATO systems, US officials have been warning that Turkey could be sanctioned and expelled from the F-35 programme if it

takes delivery of the S-400 system. With the United States tabling an alternative \$3.5 billion Patriot missile defence system, the deal with Russia could yet be cancelled and the pivot to Moscow (as witnessed by increased Turkish-Russian cooperation in Syria) put on hold.

10. NATO enlargement: Macedonia to become NATO’s 30th member state

The route to resolving the dispute between Greece and Macedonia about the latter’s official name was long and bumpy, but implementation of the June 2018 agreement is close to being finalised. The Republic of North Macedonia, as it will be known, is expected to make the necessary constitutional changes and remove provisions related to territorial claims in January, and then the deal is expected to be ratified by the Greek parliament by March at the latest. Thereafter, the door opens for Macedonia to become the 30th NATO member state. Once the protocol for NATO membership has been signed, Macedonia will start to participate in NATO structures, but without the right to vote. Ratification of Macedonia’s protocol for membership by all 29 parliaments of the NATO member states is expected to take about 12-18 months, after which Macedonia will become a full member of NATO. Will it have been worth the wait? For detractors, joining the alliance will come with major costs—including expensive upgrades to the country’s armed forces—and may deepen Macedonia’s involvement in NATO’s disputes with Russia. Enthusiasts, on the other hand, emphasise the stabilizing effects of membership and a possible reduction of Russian influence.

News, Commentary and Reports:

Air Power

During the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in October (see below), Defence Ministers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia signed a MOU to create a Multinational Special Aviation Program, which will establish a new training centre in Croatia dedicated exclusively to training air crews, who will conduct the insertion and extraction of Special Operations Forces.

Russia's air force will start to receive new [Beriev A-100](#) Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS) aircraft starting around late 2020 or early 2021. The AWACS should significantly boost the capability of the Russian Air Force to gain and maintain air superiority when coupled with capable fighter aircraft such as the Sukhoi Su-30SM Flanker-H and the Sukhoi Su-35S Flanker-E.

[Four Allies sign agreement to create a Multinational Special Aviation Program with a training facility in Zadar, Croatia](#), NATO News Release, 4 October 2018

[NATO Holds Drills to Deter Russian Planes From Entering Airspace](#), Moscow Times, 13 September 2018

[European NATO jets showcase unified Russian deterrence](#), Reuters, 12 September 2018

Dave Majumdar, [This New Russian Plane Could Cause Some Serious Problems for NATO](#), National Interest, 11 September 2018

[NATO rotates Baltic, Romanian air policing duties](#), Flight Global, 10 September 2018

Arms Control & Disarmament: the INF Treaty

The INF treaty banned all missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometres. It protected the European continent from those weapons, and

also banned US Pershing cruise missiles, which had been deployed by the US and Germany. Since 2014, the United States has accused Russia of violating the treaty, and Washington [has imposed sanctions](#) intended to pressure Russia into compliance. Russia has denied violating the treaty but has accused Washington of doing so with a missile defence system deployed in Europe.

The United States has threatened to abandon the treaty and develop its own medium-range cruise missile if Russia refuses to come back into compliance, raising the risk of a [new nuclear arms race](#).

On the day before the NATO defence ministers meeting in October, during a press conference the US ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison appeared to go further in [saying](#) that the United States might "take out" Russian missiles it views as violating the treaty. Although Ambassador Hutchinson later the same day clarified [on Twitter](#) that she did not mean to suggest that Washington was considering a pre-emptive strike against Russian missile sites, her earlier comments generated a [sharp reaction from Moscow](#). Any US threat of a pre-emptive strike against Russia would be unprecedented since the end of the cold war, and a dangerous new departure in rhetoric and military posture towards Russia.

In November, a bipartisan group of nonproliferation experts that included former US Secretary of State George Shultz and former Sens. Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn wrote to President Trump asking that he save the treaty. Also in November Jens Stoltenberg urged Beijing to join an expanded INF Treaty, so that its missiles would become bound by it.

NATO Foreign Ministers in December also discussed the treaty and issued a [Statement on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces \(INF\) Treaty](#), in which they formally agreed that the

deployment of Russia's new ground-launched cruise missile system violates the treaty. They also agreed to begin planning for a post-INF Treaty world, while once again calling on Russia to comply with the treaty. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [announced](#) at the meeting that the United States will abandon the treaty unless Russia returns to compliance. But rather than issue a formal withdrawal notice—which would have started a six-month clock for formal US withdrawal—he established 60-day window in which European allies could continue lobbying Russia to eliminate the disputed missile system. (The possible legal routes through which the Trump administration could seek to exit the INF Treaty are discussed [here](#)).

The allegations that Russia is in violation of the INF treaty are difficult to evaluate, not least because the inspection regime for verifying INF commitments [ceased in 2001](#). The Russian missile at the centre of the allegations, [the Novator 9M729 missile system](#), which carries the NATO designation SSC-8, was first tested in 2008 according to reports in the *New York Times* in 2014. The US State Department has [said](#) that the missiles have been deployed for “offensive purposes”. However, independently verified technical details about the missile and its development remain thin on the ground.

While Russian officials have belatedly admitted the existence of the 9M729 missile system, they claim that it does not violate INF provisions. (For the official Russian viewpoint on the INF Treaty and US accusations, see this [briefing](#) by Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergey Ryabkov, dated 26 November 2018).

NATO Watch view: The INF Treaty was a milestone in ending the Cold War and building a degree of confidence and trust between the opposing sides. Its demise would be a huge set back to

arms control, risks undermining the overall architecture which controls nuclear weapons and raises the risk of a [new nuclear arms race](#). It is far from clear that Russia is in violation of the treaty and both sides should resume negotiations to resolve their respective concerns.

I am certain that, at some time in the future, President Xi and I, together with President Putin of Russia, will start talking about a meaningful halt to what has become a major and uncontrollable Arms Race. The U.S. spent 716 Billion Dollars this year. Crazy!

Donald J. Trump, [Twitter](#), 3 December 2018

Americans should recall that, since August 6, 1945, the ratcheting up of nuclear weapons competition has always begun in Washington. And so it has again.

James Carroll, [“They Will Not Forgive Us”: Donald Trump Welcomes in the Age of “Usable” Nuclear Weapons](#), TomDispatch, 4 November 2018

Scott R. Anderson, [What's Happening with the INF Treaty?](#) Lawfare, 13 December 2018

Richard Burt and Ellen Tauscher, [The INF nuclear treaty is worth saving. Trump and Putin should give it a 6-month try](#), USA Today, 13 December 2018

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[State Department: Russia's illegal missiles are for 'offensive purposes'](#), Washington Examiner, 6 December 2018

[Nato says Russia's ground-launched missile system violates INF Treaty](#), Army Technology, 6 December 2018

[Russia's controversial 9M729 missile system: A not-so-secret secret](#), Deutsche Welle, 5 December 2018

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[Trump and NATO Show Rare Unity in Confronting Russia's Arms Treaty Violation](#), Foreign Policy, 4 December 2018

[Nato accuses Russia of breaking nuclear missile treaty](#), BBC News, 4 December 2018

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[European diplomats mount last-ditch effort to stop US ditching INF treaty](#), The Guardian, 18 November 2018

[Chinese missiles would violate international nuclear arms treaty – Nato chief](#), South China Morning Post, 13 November 2018

[NATO chief calls on Russia to stick with INF Treaty](#), Defense News, 12 November 2018

[Secretary General stresses importance of transatlantic bond, INF Treaty](#), NATO News Release, 12 November 2018

Conn Hallinan, [Unwrapping Armageddon: The Erosion of Nuclear Arms Control](#), Foreign Policy in Focus, 9 November 2018

[In Bipartisan Pleas, Experts Urge Trump to Save Nuclear Treaty With Russia](#), New York Times, 8 November 2018

Malcolm Chalmers and Dmitry Stefanovich, [Is This the End of Nuclear Arms Control?](#) RUSI Newsbrief, Vol. 38, No. 10, November/December 2018

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Scott R. Anderson, [Three Ways to Leave the INF Treaty](#), Lawfare (blog), 29 October 2018

[NATO arms control experts discuss Weapons of Mass Destruction, disarmament and non-proliferation](#), NATO News Release, 29 October 2018

[Mattis looks to calm European allies nervous about INF treaty](#), CNBC, 28 October 2018

[US Coordinating With NATO Allies on Exit From INF Treaty](#), Epoch Times, 28 October 2018

[NATO urges Trump officials not to quit nuclear treaty](#), Euractiv, 26 October 2018

Maxwell Downman, [Europe and the INF Treaty: Defending restraint in international diplomacy](#), BASIC, 26 October 2018

[NATO Envoys Reportedly Urge Trump to Keep INF Treaty in 'Last-Ditch Effort'](#), Sputnik News, 26 October 2018

[NATO urges Trump officials not to quit nuclear treaty: diplomats](#), Reuters, 25 October 2018

[North Atlantic Council discusses INF](#), NATO News Release, 25 October 2018

Hilary Hurd and Elena Chachko, [U.S. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty: The Facts and the Law](#), Lawfare (blog), 25 October 2018

[Stoltenberg Says NATO Doesn't Want New Arms Race While Siding With Trump on INF](#), Sputnik News, 24 October 2018

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[NATO chief: Nuclear buildup unlikely despite missile dispute](#), PBS, 24 October 2018

Dan Smith, [The crumbling architecture of arms control](#), SIPRI Commentary, 23 October 2018

Must Read: Simon Tisdall, [Trump is creating a nuclear threat worse than the cold war](#), The Guardian, 23 October 2018

Jeffrey Lewis, [Trump's Punk Rock Nuclear Policy](#), Foreign Policy, 23 October 2018

James Cameron, [The Impending Demise of the INF Treaty: Britain Has a Job on Its Hands](#), RUSI Commentary, 22 October 2018

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[Russia Blasts 'Dangerous' U.S. Threat on Missiles as Trump NATO Envoy Walks Back Comments](#), Haaretz, 3 October 2018

[NATO accuses Russia of violating nuclear treaty](#), Politico, 2 October 2018

[US, NATO say that new Russian missile violates nuclear treaty](#), Stars and Stripes, 2 October 2018

[US Nato envoy's threat to Russia: stop developing missile or we'll 'take it out'](#), The Guardian, 2 October 2018

[US, Russia remain at 'impasse' over Open Skies treaty flights](#), Defense News, 15 September 2018

Chemical Weapons

In September, UK prosecutors charged two Russian men, Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, with the attempted murder in March of a former Russian agent and his daughter using a military-grade nerve agent (see NATO Watch Observatory No. [47](#) and [48](#)). Despite Russian denials, evidence continued to grow linking the two men to Russian intelligence.

Must Read: Alexey Kovalev, [The Skripals were victims of Russia – but not necessarily of Putin](#), The Guardian, 13 September 2018

[Putin is responsible for novichok poisoning, says UK minister](#), The Guardian, 6 September 2018

[UK National Security Adviser briefs NATO Council on developments following Salisbury attack](#), NATO News Release, 5 September 2018

Collective Defence

In a December paper, [Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the U.S. Military Presence in North Central Europe](#), former NATO Supreme Allied Commander and retired Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove and former Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow proposed “a carefully calibrated mix of permanent and rotational deployments in Poland and the wider region” to deter Russia and reinforce the alliance. Many of the enhancements Breedlove and

Vershbow recommend would bolster the US presence in Poland, which is a key staging area for most NATO efforts to defend the Baltics. And it would make some elements of the US deployment to Poland permanent.

Andrew Michta, [Shoring Up NATO Is in Europe's Own Interest](#), The American Interest, 28 December 2018

[Think tank: NATO must prepare to counter a rapid Russia invasion in Europe](#), Military Times, 18 December 2018

General Philip Breedlove and Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, [Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the US Military Presence in North Central Europe](#), Atlantic Council/ Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, December 2018

Hans Binnendijk and Gene Germanovich, [NATO needs a European level of ambition](#), Military Times, 7 December 2018

[Top NATO leader warns against competition amid talk of a European army](#), Stars and Stripes, 20 November 2018

[NATO official warns EU force would be 'unwise'](#), Defense News, 18 November 2018

[NATO nudges Europe to make its transport networks war-ready](#), Defense News, 14 November 2018

[NATO general: Europe not moving fast enough on military mobility](#), Defense News, 1 November 2018

Arctic security

Mary Thompson-Jones, [NATO's Arctic Exercise is a Good Start to Standing Up to Russian Militarization of the High North](#), The National Interest, 6 November 2018

[NATO back on the hunt for Russian submarines in the Arctic](#), CNN, 25 October 2018

John Andreas Olsen, ed., [Security in Northern Europe: Deterrence, Defence and Dialogue](#), RUSI Whitehall Papers, 25 October 2018

[French Navy vessel becomes first NATO-flagged naval ship to sail Russia's Northern Sea Route](#), Jane's Navy International, 11 October 2018

Southern Flank

Jean-Loup Samaan, [Outflanked? NATO's Southern Hub and the Struggle for its Middle East Strategy](#), *The International Spectator*, Vol. 53 No.4, 2018, pp. 58-74.

Counter Terrorism

In the July 2018 [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) NATO reiterated its commitment to an “enhanced role in the international community’s fight against terrorism, including through awareness and analysis, preparedness and responsiveness, capabilities, capacity building and partnerships, and operations”. To date, NATO’s counter-terrorism focus has been on NATO training missions in the Middle East and North Africa, the use of NATO surveillance planes and air-to-air refuelling in support of the anti-ISIS coalition, and since May 2017, full membership of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

[New NATO scientific projects to help with the fight against terrorism](#), NATO News Release, 12 November 2018

[Secretary General at Ground Zero: NATO stands with the US in the fight against terrorism](#), NATO News Release, 26 September 2018

[Croatian and UK ships join NATO's Operation Sea Guardian](#), NATO News Release, 7 September 2018

[NATO: Al-Qaida Trying to Regain Primacy as IS Loses Ground](#), Voice of America, 4 September 2018

[Al Qaeda trying to regain primacy as Islamic State loses ground: NATO](#), Reuters, 4 September 2018

Cyber Security and Information Warfare

While NATO does not have its own cyber weapons, the alliance established an operations centre on 31 August at its military hub in Mons, Belgium. The United States, Britain, Estonia and other allies have since offered their cyber capabilities. The new NATO cyber

operations centre (CYOC) is expected to be fully staffed by 2023 and able to mount its own cyber attacks. However, the alliance is still grappling with ground rules for doing so according to Major General Wolfgang Renner, a German air force commander who oversees the CYOC.

NATO’s largest cyber conference, [NIAS](#) took place in Mons, Belgium, on 16-18 October. This year’s theme, ‘NIAS18: Securing NATO’s Digital Endeavour’, focused on cross-domain applications of cyber security within the alliance.

Dominik P. Jankowski, [NATO Can No Longer Afford to Be Complacent About Russia's Cyber Threat](#), World Politics Review, 19 December 2018

Sophie Arts, [Offense as the New Defense: New Life for NATO's Cyber Policy](#), GMF Policy Brief No.39, December 2018

[Allied Intelligence Chiefs discuss countering cyber-attacks](#), disinformation, NATO News Release, 4 December 2018

[NATO Practicing Cyber-Warfare Games](#), The New American, 2 December 2018

[NATO Tests Electronic Defenses as Cyber Warfare Threat Grows](#), Military.com, 1 December 2018

[NATO exercises cyber defences as threat grows](#), France 24, 30 November 2018

[Cyber Defence Centre contributing to NATO exercise underway in Tartu](#), ERR News, 29 November 2018

[NATO Readies for Cyber Threats on Russian Doorstep](#), Bloomberg, 29 November 2018

[Cyber Coalition helps prepare NATO for today's threats](#), NATO News Release, 27 November 2018

Axel Hagelstam and Kirsti Narinen, [Cooperating to counter hybrid threats](#), NATO Review, 23 November 2018

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Chia Jie Lin, [How NATO fights fake news](#), Gov Insider, 8 November 2018 - Interview with Aivar Jaeski, former deputy director of the NATO Strategic Communications

Centre of Excellence and former colonel of the Estonian Defence Forces.

[Indra signs agreement to join Nato's cyber defence coalition](#), Army Technology, 24 October 2018

Federico Plantera, [NATO CCDCOE - Expertise and cooperation make our cyber space safer](#), E-Estonia.com, October 2018

[What's driving NATO's boost in cyber operations](#), Fifth Domain, 17 October 2018

[NATO cyber command to be fully operational in 2023](#), Reuters, 16 October 2018

[Russia must stop cyber attacks on West: NATO's Stoltenberg](#), Reuters, 4 October 2018

[Statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Russian cyber attacks](#), NATO Press Release, 4 October 2018

[US to offer cyberwar capabilities to NATO allies](#), ledger Enquirer, 2 October 2018

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Jack O. Nassetta and Ethan P. Fecht, [All the World is Staged: An Analysis of Social Media Influence Operations against US Counterproliferation Efforts in Syria](#), CNS Occasional Paper No. 37, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, September 2018

Aaaron Mehta, [Has a cyberattack constituted an act of war? Probably not yet](#), Fifth Domain, 11 September 2018

Defence Budgets and Procurement

The burden-sharing debate that dominated the NATO Summit in July (see NATO Watch Observatory No. 48) continued to be a key background issue in the remainder of the year. In December, NATO member states agreed the civil and military budgets for 2019. The civil budget, which provides funds for personnel, operating costs, and programme expenditures at NATO headquarters in Brussels is €250.5 million (an increase of 1.9 per cent above the 2018 level).

The military budget, which covers the operating costs of NATO Command Structure headquarters and programmes, missions and operations around the world, is €1.395 billion (an increase of 7.2 per cent above the 2018 level). All member countries contribute to these budgets, according to an agreed cost-sharing formula based on Gross National Income.

The NATO-Industry Forum took place on 12-13 November 2018 in Berlin. It is the primary venue for strategic dialogue with the defence and security industry on NATO capability planning and development, and included contributions from NATO ambassadors and military representatives, senior representatives of Germany as host nation, NATO and European institutions, Chief Executive Officers and Senior Executives from the defence and security industry, think-tankers and other opinion formers.

[NATO agrees 2019 civil and military budgets for further adaptation](#), NATO News Release, 19 December 2018

Barry Posen, [Want NATO Allies to Boost Defense Spending? Don't Build Fort Trump](#), Defense One, 18 December 2018

[NATO completes E-3A GATM upgrades](#), Jane's Defence Weekly, 18 December 2018

[NATO fleet fully equipped with digital cockpits after Boeing completes AWACS upgrades](#), Intelligent Aerospace, 18 December 2018

[NATO Members Drive Fastest Increase in Global Defence Spending for a Decade, Jane's by IHS Markit Reveals](#), Business Wire, 18 December 2018

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[To combat Russian subs, NATO allies are teaming up to develop unmanned systems at sea](#), Defense News, 21 October 2018

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Ramon Marks, [Reality Check: NATO’s Defense Budget Woes Won’t Disappear](#), The National Interest, 5 September 2018

Johannes Thimm, [NATO: Unequal burden-sharing is the downside of American hegemony](#), Euractiv, 4 September 2018

Energy Security

During the NATO Summit in July President Trump accused Germany of being a “captive to Russia” because of an energy agreement with the country. This view received some support at the Warsaw Security Forum in October, with the Gazprom-sponsored Nord Stream 2 pipeline being described by some participants as a security threat for the EU and NATO.

Frank Umbach, [Commercial Project or Strategic Disorientation? The Controversial Nord Stream 2 Gas Pipeline](#), German Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper, Issue 19/2018

[Nord Stream 2 exposed as Russian weapon against NATO](#), Euractiv, 25 October 2018

Enlargement & Partnerships

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan contributes to NATO-led operations and cooperates with the allies and other partner countries in many other areas. NATO supports the country’s reform efforts.

[NATO Secretary General: Azerbaijan is reliable partner of alliance](#), Azer News, 29 November 2018

Bahrain

Bahrain engages with NATO through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (see below), which the country joined in 2005.

[Diplomats from the Kingdom of Bahrain visit NATO headquarters](#), NATO News Release, 16 October 2018

[Inter-ministerial delegation from Bahrain visits NATO](#), NATO News Release, 14 September 2018

Bosnia Herzegovina

NATO supports democratic, institutional, security sector and defence reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country actively supports the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan and works with the allies and other partner countries in many other areas.

The NATO foreign ministers meeting in December (see below) gave Bosnia the green light to take a major step forward on its path toward joining the alliance, despite Bosnian Serb objections. The country was invited to submit its first annual programme of political, economic and defence reforms as part of NATO’s Membership Action Plan (MAP) process. However, is unlikely to join the alliance anytime soon, and it is unclear whether the government in Sarajevo will accept NATO’s invitation.

[US Backs NATO Membership for Bosnia, Dismisses Serb Opposition](#), Voice of America, 17 December 2018

[Bosnia invited to take first steps towards NATO membership](#), Emerging Europe, 6 December 2018

[Bosnia Set For New Move Toward NATO Membership This Week](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 3 December 2018

Colombia

In May Colombia became the latest NATO 'partner across the globe'.

[Secretary General welcomes President of Colombia to NATO](#), NATO News, 23 October 2018

[Deputy Secretary General welcomes Colombian Foreign Minister to NATO](#), NATO News Release, 18 September 2018

Egypt

Egypt engages with NATO through the Mediterranean Dialogue (see below).

[NATO ships Train with Egyptian Navy at Sea](#), NATO Allied Maritime Command, 6 December 2018

EU-NATO Relations

Following the signature of the Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation in Warsaw in July 2016, NATO and the EU have been discussing how to expand their joint work, including by bringing more coherence in their respective defence capability development priorities and output. The European Council Conclusions of June 2018 called for further deepening of NATO-EU cooperation. And in July 2018 a new [Brussels Joint Declaration](#) was signed by the NATO Secretary General, the President of the European Council, and the President of the European Commission.

NATO and the EU signed a further agreement on 10 December to cooperate in promoting good governance in the defence and security sector. As part of this agreement, the EU will contribute 2 million EUR to the NATO Building Integrity Trust Fund for 2019-2022.

[NATO and the European Union work together to tackle growing cyber threats](#), NATO News Release, 13 December 2018

[NATO and the EU sign agreement to support good governance](#), NATO News Release, 11 December 2018

[NATO and the EU Director Generals of Military Staffs discuss enhanced military cooperation](#), NATO News Release, 28 November 2018

Bart M.J. Szewczyk, [EU-NATO Coordination in Crisis Management: From Complementarity to Synergies](#), GMF Blog, 26 November 2018

Sven Biscop, EU-NATO Relations: A Long-Term Perspective, Nação e Defesa No.150 2018, pp. 85-93

[There's No Need for a European Army](#), Bloomberg Editorial, 11 November 2018 - NATO has kept the peace for nearly 70 years. Why mess with success?

Finland

Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994 and became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. Finland is one of NATO's most active partners and has contributed to NATO-led operations and missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan. It is one of five countries that has enhanced opportunities for dialogue and cooperation with NATO.

Finland's GPS signal was disrupted during NATO's military exercise, Trident Juncture (see below), in November. Finland's prime minister Juha Sipila suggested it was likely that Russia was behind the attack, which also affected air traffic in Norway. "It's possible Russia was behind the interference", Sipila said. "We're now investigating it and will react accordingly. It's no small matter, since civilian flights have been put in danger".

[Finland provides no evidence to prove Russia's role in 'GPS disruption' during NATO drills](#), TASS, 19 November 2018

[Finland says GPS signal disruption during NATO war games came from Russia](#), Reuters, 15 November 2018

[Russia denies disrupting GPS signals during Nato Arctic exercises](#), The Guardian, 12 November 2018

[Finland's GPS was disrupted during NATO war games and Russia could be responsible – PM](#), Euronews, 11 November 2018

Michael Peck, [Forget Russia: Is Finland the Hybrid Warfare Champion?](#) National Interest, 27 October 2018

[Rovaniemi airbase hosting NATO warplanes](#), YLE, 25 October 2018

[President Niinistö: Russia "would see enemies" if Finland joins Nato](#), YLE, 15 September 2018

Michael Miklaucic, [Why Finland and Sweden still flirt with joining NATO](#), The Hill, 4 September 2018

Georgia

A 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration promised eventual NATO membership for Georgia – a position reiterated at several NATO summits since, and most recently in July 2018. In a meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission in October (during the NATO Defence Ministers meeting – see below), ministers expressed concern about Russia's military build-up in the Black Sea region, and agreed to continue working together to address regional security challenges.

Erik Davtyan, *Geopolitics rule NATO enlargement: the case of Macedonia and Georgia*, Stratpol, 2018

[Appathurai Speaks of "More NATO in Georgia" Next Year](#), Georgia Today, 13 December 2018

[Voters had a genuine choice and candidates campaigned freely, but on an unlevel playing field, international observers say](#), NATO Parliamentary Assembly News Release, 29 October 2018

Andrew Bierle, [Caught in the Middle: How Russia is Preventing Georgia's NATO Accession](#), Brown Political Review, 15 October 2018

[Georgian, NATO Defense Ministers Meet in Brussels, Discuss Cooperation](#), Civil.ge, 4 October 2018

[NATO Chief Reiterates That Georgia Will One Day Join The Alliance](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 3 October 2018

[NATO Defence Ministers meet with Georgia](#), NATO News Release, 3 October 2018

Giorgi Menabde, [US and NATO Send Reassuring Messages to Georgia](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 15, Issue 136, 27 September 2018

[Allies reaffirm support for Georgia in NATO-Georgia Commission](#), NATO News Release, 5 September 2018

Israel

Israel is developing closer cooperation with NATO, including maritime partnerships with NATO countries.

[NATO Deputy Secretary General meets Israeli parliamentary delegation](#), NATO News Release, 11 October 2018

[NATO Moving Maneuvers from French Soil to Allow IDF Participation](#), Jewish Press, 12 September 2018

Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was initiated in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council and currently involves seven non-NATO countries in the region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The MD aims to contribute to regional security and stability, achieve better mutual understanding.

[NATO-ICI Regional Centre Holds First Annual Review in Kuwait](#), NATO News Release, 18 October 2018

Jordan

NATO supports Jordan in the areas of cyber defence, border security and counter improvised explosive devices (C-IED). In February 2018, NATO launched a Defence Capacity Building Project to enhance Jordan's capacity in national resilience and crisis management.

[NATO stresses Jordan's 'key role' in achieving regional stability in meeting with King](#), The Jordan Times, 13 December 2018

Kuwait

Kuwait is a member of NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (see above) and hosts the NATO- ICI Regional Center, which was inaugurated in Kuwait City in 2017. In November 2018, Kuwait inaugurated the offices of its first ever diplomatic mission to NATO.

[Kuwait inaugurates diplomatic mission to NATO](#), NATO News Release, 26 November 2018

Macedonia

Accession talks for NATO membership have already begun and are expected to be concluded by January 2019. Secretary General Stoltenberg [said](#) at the Foreign Ministers meeting in December "It is now for the authorities in Skopje to implement the name agreement. When that is complete, we will be able to sign the accession protocol". Once all the constitutional changes on the new name are completed, the accession protocol will be signed giving Skopje a seat at NATO's table as its thirtieth member.

Macedonians went to the polls on 30 September to vote on an agreement its government led by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev reached with Greece earlier this year to change the country's name to North Macedonia. The name dispute between Skopje and Athens dates back to 1991, when Macedonia peacefully broke away from Yugoslavia, declaring its independence under the name Republic of Macedonia. Greece had objected to the name Macedonia, saying it implied territorial claims on the northern Greek region with the same name. Greece had cited the dispute to veto Macedonia's bid to join both NATO and the EU.

[U.S. sees Macedonia in NATO in mid-2020 after name change deal](#), Reuters, 4 December 2018

[Military Committee's visit to Skopje demonstrates NATO's strong and continued support towards the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#), NATO News Release, 9 November 2018

[EU, NATO urge quick Macedonia name change after parliament vote](#), Politico, 20 October 2018

[Macedonia Moves Ahead With Name Change, Helping Its NATO Bid](#), New York Times, 19 October 2018

[Formal Accession Talks with Skopje begin at NATO Headquarters](#), NATO News Release, 18 October 2018

[Greek PM Vows To 'Safeguard' Deal With Macedonia, Amid Government Turmoil](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 17 October 2018

[Macedonia parliament to vote on name change](#), Al Jazeera, 14 October 2018

John Dale Grover, [Only Macedonians Can Decide If They Want to Join NATO](#), The National Interest, 10 October 2018

[EU and Nato membership would be lifechanging for Macedonians, say Tusk and Stoltenberg](#), Parliament Magazine, 2 October 2018

Asya Metodieva, [How Disinformation Harmed the Referendum in Macedonia](#), GMF Blog, 2 October 2018

Simon Tisdall, [Result of Macedonia's referendum is another victory for Russia](#), The Guardian, 1 October 2018

[Macedonians Vote To Change Country's Name But Low Turnout May Imperil NATO Ambitions](#), Huffington Post, 1 October 2018

[Joint Statement](#) by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of the European Union D. Tusk on the consultative referendum in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 1 October 2018

[US praises 'positive' result in Macedonia NATO vote, despite low turnout](#), The Hill, 1 October 2018

[Troubled NATO may be about to get a new member: Macedonia](#), NBC News, 30 September 2018

[Macedonia just took a big step to becoming NATO's 30th member](#), Defense News, 30 September 2018

Leonid Bershidsky, [Tiny Macedonia at Crossroads in Struggle to Be Normal](#), Bloomberg, 28 September 2018

[What would Macedonia's NATO accession mean for the region?](#) European Western Balkans, 28 September 2018

[Macedonian President Urges Boycott Of Name Referendum](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 27 September 2018

[Twitter Bots are working to suppress voter turnout to stop Macedonia's NATO membership: Report](#), Newsweek, 27 September 2018

[Eying EU, NATO, Macedonians set for referendum on changing state's name](#), Reuters, 26 September 2018

[It's Time for Macedonia to Accept Compromise](#), Foreign Policy, 25 September 2018

[US warns Russia over interference in Macedonia referendum on changing name and joining Nato](#), Independent, 17 September 2018

[In the Balkans, Russia and the West Fight a Disinformation-Age Battle](#), New York Times, 16 September 2018

[Thousands March In Macedonia In Favor Of Name Change, NATO, EU Membership](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 16 September 2018

Florian Bieber, [For Macedonia, Is Joining NATO and the EU Worth the Trouble?](#) Foreign Policy, 13 September 2018

[Angela Merkel backs 'Macedonia' renaming referendum](#), Deutsche Welle, 8 September 2018

[Secretary General visits Skopje to discuss progress in NATO accession talks](#), NATO News Release, 6 September 2018

[Government of Macedonia forms a Committee for NATO integration](#), European Western Balkans, 5 September 2018

Samuel Siskind, [War Over Macedonia: A Long History of Ethnic Tension and Territory Dispute Is Stirring Around NATO's Newest Member](#), OpsLens, 1 September 2018

Mediterranean Dialogue

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was initiated in 1994 by the North

Atlantic Council and currently involves seven non-NATO countries in the region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The MD aims to contribute to regional security and stability, achieve better mutual understanding.

In October, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) experts from the seven MD countries attended a two-day seminar with allies at NATO HQ aimed at promoting regional and bilateral cooperation. The participants discussed the challenges emanating from the proliferation of SALW in the region.

Rome 2018 MED – Mediterranean Dialogues, [Building Trust: The Challenge of Peace and Stability in the Mediterranean](#), Italian Institute for International Political Studies, Published on the occasion of the fourth edition of Rome MED – Mediterranean Dialogues, 22-24 November 2018.

[Secretary General in Rome: NATO promotes security and stability in the Mediterranean](#), NATO News Release, 22 November 2018

[Mediterranean Dialogue Partner Countries discuss Small Arms and Light Weapons with NATO](#), NATO News Release, 10 October 2018

Morocco

In October, NATO's Political Affairs and Security Policy Division received a delegation of diplomats from Morocco, which participates in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue.

[Diplomats from the Kingdom of Morocco visit NATO HQ](#), NATO News Release, 30 October 2018

Pakistan

NATO training courses were opened to Pakistani officer in 2009, and since then a Tailored Cooperative Package of Activities includes a series of education and training opportunities for Pakistani officers and representatives. Contact between the Pakistani senior military leadership and NATO's authorities have

also gradually intensified. One of the focuses of NATO-Pakistan relations is the alliance's mission in Afghanistan.

[NATO Military Leadership hold Military Staff Talks with Pakistan](#), NATO News Release, 26 October 2018

Policy

[Allies and partners share education and training expertise](#), NATO News Release, 29 November 2018

L. Todd Wood, [The drive to expand NATO is insanity](#), Washington Times, 1 November 2018

[PKSOI and AUSA partner to put spotlight on NATO partnerships engaged in Projecting Stability](#), US Army War College, 25 October 2018

Ted Galen Carpenter, [Poking the Russian Bear With the NATO Umbrella](#), The American Conservative, 23 October 2018

Qatar

Qatar is one of four countries—along with Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates—participating in NATO's 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. In January 2018, Qatar signed a security agreement with NATO and in March signed a further agreement allowing NATO forces and personnel to enter and transit Qatar, and to use the Al-Udeid Air Base.

[Relations with Nato strategic and deep, says ambassador](#), Gulf Times, 19 September 2018

[Inter-ministerial delegation from Qatar visits NATO Headquarters](#), NATO News Release, 18 September 2018

Science for Peace and Security Programme

In November, NATO celebrated the 60th anniversary of the alliance's leading initiative for science, innovation and research. The NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme was created in 1958 to promote the training of scientists, encourage the sharing of knowledge, and build networks of experts.

[NATO Uses IoT to Study the Oceans](#), Marine Technology News, 11 December 2018

[NATO exhibition features 60 years of scientific innovation](#), NATO News Release, 29 November 2018

[NATO's Science for Peace and Security Programme: sixty years old, still going strong](#), NATO News Release, 29 November 2018

[60th Anniversary of NATO's Science for Peace Programme](#), NATO Press Release, 28 November 2018

Serbia

Unlike other Western Balkan partners, Serbia does not aspire to join NATO. However, the country is deepening its political dialogue and cooperation with the alliance on issues of common interest, such as defence reforms. In October, NATO conducted its biggest disaster relief exercise, with 40 countries participating, and the first such exercise hosted in Serbia. The final stage of preparation is currently under way to adopt of the second cycle of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) between Serbia and NATO.

[A survey](#) on 'Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina' conducted between 30 October and 6 November 2018 (with a representative sample of 1010 citizens) found that if a referendum on Serbia's accession to NATO were to be held, 68 per cent of the population would oppose it, 11 per cent would vote for, and 21 per cent would not participate.

[Survey in Serbia: Reason for joining NATO – security, reason against – bombing](#), European Western Balkans, 28 December 2018

["Serbia-NATO action plan to be supplemented"](#), B92, 27 December 2018

[Serbia increasingly active within NATO's Science for Peace and Security Programme](#), European Western Balkans, 24 December 2018

[Belgrade NATO week: What is the best solution for normalisation of relations?](#)

European Western Balkans, 9 November 2018

[Serbia and NATO "share same goals" - US ambassador](#), B92, 8 November 2018

[Cazalet: Serbia-NATO cooperation increasing, should be communicated better](#), European Western Balkans, 26 October 2018

[Two NATO scientific projects successfully tested in Serbia](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2018

[Stoltenberg: It's important to cooperate in the future despite disagreement on 1999](#), European Western Balkans, 11 October 2018

[Nato and Serbia put bombing behind them](#), BBC News, 10 October 2018

[Rescuers tackle staged fires, quakes in NATO-Serbia disaster drill](#), Reuters, 8 October 2018

[NATO Secretary General thanks Serbia for hosting civil emergency exercise](#), NATO News Release, 8 October 2018

[20 years since NATO said it would use force against Serbia](#), B92, 24 September 2018

[Serbia to Host NATO Disaster-Response Exercise](#), Balkan Insight, 21 September 2018

Marko Savković, [How NATO membership has become a necessity for the Western Balkans](#), European Western Balkans, 3 September 2018

Sweden

Sweden's 7.3 million voters went to the polls on 9 September to elect a new parliament and government. The coalition of leftist and environmental parties, known as the red-green alliance, won 144 of 349 seats in Parliament, while the center-right alliance, led by Ulf Kristersson of the Moderates, won 143. Negotiations to form a new government continue. Sweden contributed extensive military capabilities by land, sea and air to NATO's Trident Juncture exercise in October deploying over 2200 Swedish personnel.

[Russians Tried to Jam NATO Exercise: Swedes Say They've Seen This Before](#), Breaking Defence, 20 November 2018

[Sweden is worried about Russian aggression and sending 2 stealth corvettes to NATO's largest war games since the Cold War](#), Business Insider, 22 October 2018

Whatever the Swedish people were led to believe about their country's neutrality, the Soviets knew it was a lie. Now the ruse is over: Full-scale military integration with NATO is in the offing.

Carl Bildt, [NATO exercise signals end of Scandinavian non-alignment](#), Arab News, 18 October 2018

[Shadow report from Sweden about the implications for joining the TPNW](#), IPPNW Sweden and WILPF Sweden, September 2018 (mainly in Swedish)

[Air Force JTACs, fighters, drones and more head to Ukraine to train with allies on Russia's western flank](#), Air Force Times, 24 September 2018

Kristine Berzina, [Sweden — Preparing for the Wolf, not Crying Wolf: Anticipating and Tracking Influence Operations in Advance of Sweden's 2018 General Elections](#), German Marshall Fund, 7 September 2018

Ukraine

Relations between NATO and Ukraine date back to the early 1990s and have since developed into one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships. Since 2014, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, cooperation has been intensified. At the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in October, it was announced that NATO is now helping Ukraine to set up a cyber incident response centre.

On the 25 November, [the Russian coastguard opened fire](#) on several Ukrainian Navy ships in and around the Kerch Strait. Several Ukrainian sailors were injured, 24 were taken captive and a tug and two gunboats were seized. Ukraine says they were travelling in shared waters on a routine passage to the Sea of Azov, which they have a right

to patrol under a bilateral treaty. Russia blames Ukraine for illegally entering its territorial waters and carrying out “provocative actions”. NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu said: “NATO is closely monitoring developments in the Azov Sea and the Kerch strait, and we are in contact with the Ukrainian authorities. We call for restraint and de-escalation”.

On the 26 November, The Ukrainian President discussed the crisis in a [phone call with the NATO Secretary General](#) Jens Stoltenberg, who expressed NATO’s full support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, including its full navigational rights in its territorial waters under international law.

At the request of President Poroshenko, the NATO Secretary General agreed to convene an extraordinary meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission at Ambassadorial level in Brussels later that day. After the Commission meeting, Stoltenberg told a [news conference](#), “We saw that Russia used military force against Ukraine in an open and direct way. All allies expressed full support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty”. He added, “There is no justification for the use of military force against Ukrainian ships and naval personnel so we call on Russia to release immediately the Ukrainian sailors and ships it seized yesterday”.

On the 27 November In a [statement](#), the North Atlantic Council called for “calm and restraint”, and for Russia “to release the Ukrainian sailors and ships it seized, without delay”.

On 13 December, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko [met](#) to discuss developments in and around the Sea of Azov and the NATO’s support for Ukraine. (For more on this crisis, see [NATO Watch Briefing No.67](#)).

Kyle Rempfe, [Why Russia is swallowing the Black Sea and won’t stop until it has ‘choked out Ukraine’](#), Military Times, 31 December 2018

[NATO signs deal with Kyiv to dispose of explosive devices](#), New Europe, 17 December 2018

[Ukraine, NATO sign agreement on ammunition disposal](#), Ukrinform, 15 December 2018

[NATO Secretary General and President Poroshenko discuss developments in and around the Sea of Azov](#), NATO News Release, 13 December 2018

[NATO Pledges Support For Ukraine Over Sea Of Azov Incident](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 13 December 2018

Wojciech Pawlus, [Sea of Azov Crisis: Ukraine and Russia Clash, as do Competing Visions of European Security](#), RUSI Commentary, 12 December 2018

[At 2008 NATO-Russia Council, Putin called Ukraine “artificial formation” and “mistake in history” – Linkevicius](#), UNIAN, 7 December 2018

[Poroshenko sees threat to NATO in number of Russia's naval ships in Black Sea](#), UNIAN, 7 December 2018

Petro Burkovskyi and Oleksiy Haran, [Dire strait: Russian naval aggression and Ukrainian politics](#), ECFR Commentary, 5 December 2018

Jonathan Marcus, [Ukraine-Russia clash: Nato's dilemma in the Black Sea](#), BBC News, 4 December 2018

[EU, NATO React Coolly To Ukraine's Call For New Moves Against Russia](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 30 November 2018

Andrei Kolesnikov, [Will the Kerch Blockade Make Putin Great Again?](#) Carnegie Moscow Center Commentary, 30 November 2018

[Ukraine-Russia sea clash: Trump cancels Putin talks](#), BBC News, 29 November 2018

[Ukraine Urges NATO to Deploy Naval Ships Amid an Escalating Standoff With Russia](#), TIME, 29 November 2018

Must Read: Dmitri Trenin, [Containing the Kerch Crisis: Struggle for Ukraine](#), Carnegie Moscow Center Commentary, 28 November 2018

[North Atlantic Council statement on developments near the Sea of Azov](#), NATO Press Release, 27 November 2018

Iryna Somer, [If Russia wages all-out war, non-NATO member Ukraine is on its own](#), Kiev Post, 27 November 2018

[NATO Secretary General's phone call with President Poroshenko](#), NATO News Release, 26 November 2016

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, 26 November 2018

[NATO head urges Russia to free Ukrainian sailors and ships](#), Reuters, 26 November 2018

Jonathan Katz, [Time for Trump to Stand Up to Putin After the Sea of Azov Attack](#), GMF Transatlantic Take, November 2018

[Statement by the NATO Spokesperson on the reported elections in eastern Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 11 November 2018

[Enhancing cybersecurity in Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 29 October 2018

[No consensus yet in NATO on MAP for Ukraine: Klimkin](#), UNIAN, 16 October 2018

[Unlocking of NATO-Ukraine Commission's work depends on agreements between Kyiv, Budapest – Stoltenberg](#), UNIAN, 15 October 2018

[Ukraine Launches Air Exercises With NATO Countries](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 8 October 2018

[NATO helping Ukraine with strengthening cyber defences](#), UNIAN, 4 October 2018

[NATO concerned over situation in Sea of Azov](#), UNIAN, 4 October 2018

[NATO-Ukraine Trust Fund marks milestones in rehabilitation of wounded service personnel](#), NATO News Release, 28 September 2018

[Ukraine's accession to EU, NATO supported by 70 percent of Ukrainians](#), Kyiv Post, 21 September 2018

[Ukraine's Top Court To Review Constitutional Amendments On EU, NATO Membership Goal](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 20 September 2018

[NATO assistant secretary general: Alliance ready for 21st century threats](#), Kyiv Post, 19 September 2018

[U.S. Air Force to Join Ukraine in Military Exercises to Bolster NATO and Regional Security](#), Newsweek, 19 September 2018

[Over 40% of Ukrainians back accession to NATO, over a third support non-aligned status – poll](#), Interfax-Ukraine, 11 September 2018

[Poll: 67% of Ukrainians ready to vote for membership in NATO](#), Ukrinform, 11 September 2018

[Ukraine parliament publishes amendments to Constitution on Ukraine's path to EU, NATO](#), 4 September 2018

[Merkel personally supported Ukraine's NATO prospects – Ukraine envoy](#), UNIAN, 4 September 2018

[Ukraine-NATO Joint Military Exercises Begin In Lviv Region](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 3 September 2018

UN-NATO Relations

NATO and the United Nations are building on dialogue and cooperation developed after the end of the Cold War. A structured framework for cooperation was set out in a Joint Declaration agreed in 2008.

[NATO-UN relations can be developed further](#), NATO Parliamentary Assembly News Release, 30 October 2018

Endre Sebok, [NATO-UN relations: looking ahead after 10 years of expanding cooperation](#), NATO Review, 28 September 2018

[NATO Secretary General joins world leaders for UN General Assembly](#), NATO News Release, 26 September 2018

Maritime Security

NATO's Maritime Strategy, agreed in 2011, sets out a series of activities that includes collective defence, crisis management, cooperative security and maritime security.

Rowan Allport, [Fire and Ice: A New Maritime Strategy for NATO's Northern Flank](#), Human Security Centre, December 2018

[NATO's maritime research centre at risk for lack of stable funding model, says report](#),

IHS Jane's Defence Weekly, 17 November 2018

Stephen Flanagan, [NATO's Return to the North Atlantic: Implications for the Defense of Northern Europe](#), FIIA Briefing Paper 250, November 2018

[Thirteen Allies to cooperate on the introduction of Maritime Unmanned Systems](#), NATO News Release, 3 October 2018

Military Exercises

On the 25 October, military forces from 31 countries began NATO's largest exercise in decades, stretching from the Baltic Sea to Iceland, practicing military manoeuvres close to Russia, which itself held a huge military exercise in September called [Vostok-2018](#) (East-2018). Some 50,000 troops, 250 aircraft and 10,000 tanks, trucks and other land-based vehicles took part in [Trident Juncture](#) hosted by Norway. Russian forces directly participating in Vostok 2018 probably numbered around 100,000 and also included a contingent of Chinese troops. The exercise saw Russian and Chinese troops rehearse a major conflict that covered much of eastern Russia, probably with the United States as its tacit, pretend enemy.

In 2018, NATO conducted 106 exercises (two more than in 2017), and its members held 180 national and multinational exercises (18 more than in 2017). Those exercises vary in scope, duration, and form, ranging from live exercises involving thousands of troops to computer-assisted exercises in a classroom.

Trident Juncture 2018 – [official website](#)

Dave Johnson, [VOSTOK 2018: Ten years of Russian strategic exercises and warfare preparation](#), NATO Review, 20 December 2018

Leonid Ragozin, [How NATO Is Preparing for the New Cold War](#), Bloomberg, 20 November 2018

Jack Watling, [NATO's Trident Juncture 2018 Exercise: Political Theatre with a Purpose](#), RUSI Commentary, 20 November 2018

Peter Pry, [NATO's Trident Juncture 18 Playing With Fire](#), NewsMax, 19 November 2018

[Finland, Norway press Russia on suspected GPS jamming during NATO drill](#), Defense News, 16 November 2018

Jay Paxton, [Trident Juncture and the information environment](#), NATO Review, 16 November 2018

[Eight Allies join forces in Romania for Exercise SCORPIONS FURY 18](#), NATO News Release, 15 November 2018

[Russia jammed GPS during major NATO military exercise with US troops](#), CNN, 14 November 2018

[Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland host NATO Allies for exercise ANAKONDA 2018](#), NATO News Release, 13 November 2018

John Dale Grover, [Veterans Day should remind us of the perils of escalation](#), The Hill, 11 November 2018

Aric Toler, [Open Source Monitoring of NATO Trident Juncture Exercises](#), Bellingcat, 6 November 2018

[NATO war games spark Russian Twitter feud](#), Euronews, 6 November 2018

[Russia turns up uninvited to major NATO wargames](#), France 24, 3 November 2018

[International observers visit exercise Trident Juncture 2018](#), NATO News Release, 1 November 2018

Tony Lawrence, [NATO's Trident Juncture: Old Dog, Old and New Tricks](#), International Centre for Defence and Security (blog), 1 November 2018

['Cold War' Takes New Meaning for U.S. Marines at a NATO Exercise](#), New York Times, 31 October 2018

[Russia Plans Missile-Firing Exercise Off Norway Amid NATO Drills](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 29 October 2018

[NATO launches its largest war games since end of Cold War](#), Al Jazeera, 25 October 2018

Derek Chollet, [Why NATO's Trident Juncture is Essential](#), GMF Commentary, 25 October 2018

[USS Harry S. Truman Strike Group Joins NATO for Trident Juncture](#), US Navy, 25 October 2018

Jonathan Masters, [NATO's Trident Juncture Exercises: What to Know](#), Council on Foreign Relations, 23 October 2018

Erlingur Erlingsson, [A credible transatlantic bond: Trident Juncture and NATO capabilities](#), NATO Review, 19 October 2018

[Battle for the Arctic: NATO's Trident Juncture aims to demonstrate its dominance to Russia](#), RT, 18 October 2018

[NATO Secretary General visits USS Harry S. Truman, en route to Exercise Trident Juncture](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2018

[UK and German forces test military mobility en route to NATO's biggest exercise in decades](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2018

[Trident Juncture 2018 Press Conference](#) with Admiral James G. Foggo, Commander of Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, Italy, and Lieutenant General Rune Jakobsen, Commander of the Norwegian Joint Headquarters in Bodø, Norway, 10 October 2018

[Trident Juncture: NATO will hold largest drill in 2 decades, but General says Russia should not 'Get Scared'](#), Newsweek, 10 October 2018

[Largest NATO drill in 16 years brings carrier, US forces to Norway](#), Stars and Stripes, 9 October 2018

[US aircraft carrier Truman will sail in huge NATO exercise](#), Defense News, 9 October 2018

[Autonomous systems to play key role in NATO logistics drills](#), Defense News, 7 October 2018

[US, NATO forces to conduct largest exercise since 2002 that sends message to one nation: Russia](#), ABC News, 5 October 2018

[NATO invites Russia to monitor Trident Juncture military drills](#), TASS, 2 October 2018

[NATO views Vostok with both a shrug and a show of force](#), Deutsche Welle, 15 September 2019

[Russia's largest-ever war games and NATO concerns](#), Al Jazeera, 13 September 2018

[NATO, Russia Drill Their Military Forces Amid Raised Tensions](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 13 September 2018

[Russia launches biggest war games since Cold War](#), BBC News, 11 September 2018

[Russia prepares for biggest war games in its history](#), Economic Times, 10 September 2018

[NATO battlegroups exercise across Baltic borders](#), NATO News Release, 7 September 2018

[German forces land in Norway for major NATO exercises](#), Reuters, 7 September 2018

Jack Watling, [Russia's Vostok-2018 Exercise is About a Lot More Than War With NATO](#), RUSI Commentary, 7 September 2018

James Stavridis, [Russia and NATO Show War Games Aren't Just Games](#), Bloomberg, 6 September 2018

[NATO, Russia Prep Biggest War Games Since Cold War](#), Breaking Defense, 4 September 2018

[Russia reveals what its largest war games in modern history will look like](#), Newsweek, 4 September 2018

NATO Defence Ministers Meeting Brussels, 3-4 October 2018

The Defence Ministers addressed “serious concerns” about Russia’s “reckless pattern of behaviour”, including an “indiscriminate campaign of cyber attacks around the world” and alleged violation of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, and called on Russia to address those concerns.

The Defence Ministers were briefed about a foiled Russian military intelligence service cyber operation against the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; several member states, including the United States, offered their cyber capabilities to NATO.

Defence Ministers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create a Multinational Special Aviation Programme, which will establish a new training centre in Croatia by the end of 2019 dedicated exclusively to training air crews, who will conduct the insertion and extraction of Special Operations Forces. In addition, Defence Ministers from thirteen NATO allies signed a declaration of intent to cooperate on the introduction of Maritime Unmanned Systems.

[NATO defence ministers' censure Russian cyber attacks and INF Treaty violation while taking forward decisions from July Summit:](#)

A review of the NATO Defence Ministers meeting, Brussels, 3-4 October 2018, NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.65, 8 October 2015

[NATO Secretary General's press conference following Defence Ministers' meeting,](#) NATO News Release, 4 October 2018

[Secretary General previews defence ministerial,](#) NATO News Release, 2 October 2018

NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting Brussels, 4-5 December 2018

The NATO foreign ministers met in Brussels for a two-day meeting to discuss issues arising from the July NATO Summit, as well as recent geopolitical developments impacting on transatlantic security. The agenda was focused on five main issues:

- the INF Treaty;
- the recent Sea of Azov conflict—the latest chapter in the broader Russia-Ukraine conflict—as well as NATO's cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine;
- security and stability in the Western Balkans;
- continuing instability in Afghanistan; and
- the alliance's approach to the Middle East and North Africa, with a focus on NATO's new training mission in Iraq.

The Foreign Ministers issued a [Statement on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces \(INF\) Treaty](#), in which they formally stated that the deployment of Russia's new ground-launched cruise missile system violates the treaty. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the United States will abandon the treaty unless Russia returns to compliance (see Arms Control section above).

The Foreign Ministers called on Russia to release the Ukrainian sailors and ships seized on 25 November, near the Sea of Azov (see Ukraine section above), and invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to take the first steps towards NATO membership.

A [Resolute Support Foreign Ministers Statement on Afghanistan](#) reaffirmed the commitment of NATO and partners to the long-term security and stability of Afghanistan, and to an Afghan-led and owned peace process (see the Afghanistan section below).

[NATO foreign ministers' meeting dominated by Ukraine-Russia conflict and INF Treaty:](#) A review of the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting, Brussels, 4-5 December 2018, NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.67, 2 January 2019

[NATO Foreign Ministers conclude two-day meeting in Brussels,](#) NATO News Release, 5 December 2018

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council with Resolute Support Operational Partner and Potential Operational Partner Nations in Foreign Ministers' session, 5 December 2018

[Resolute Support Foreign Ministers Statement on Afghanistan,](#) NATO Press Release, 5 December 2018

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Foreign Ministers' session, 4 December 2018

[Press Availability at NATO Headquarters,](#) Michael R. Pompeo, US Secretary of State, 4 December 2018

[Statement on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces \(INF\) Treaty](#), Issued by the NATO Foreign Ministers, Brussels, 4 December 2018

[NATO Foreign Ministers meet in Brussels](#), NATO News Release, 4 December 2018

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the NAC with Georgia and Ukraine, 4 December 2018

[Doorstep statement](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Brussels, 4 December 2018

[NATO Foreign Ministers to address key security challenges](#), NATO News Release, 3 December 2018

NATO Military Committee Meeting

Warsaw, 28-30 September 2018

The NATO Military Committee—the most senior military authority within NATO and comprising the 29 chiefs of defence—met in September 2018 in Warsaw, Poland. According to the media release, discussions focused on allied operations, missions and activities, the development of NATO's Military Strategy, Responsiveness, Reinforcement and the NATO Readiness Initiative, as well as the alliance's ongoing modernisation.

[Chiefs Reaffirm Commitment to NATO Missions, Look to Future Needs](#), US Department of Defense News Release, 30 September 2018

[NATO Moves to Combat Russian Hybrid Warfare](#), US Department of Defense, News Release, 29 September 2018

[NATO Military Committee Examines Full Range of Alliance Challenges](#), US Department of Defense, News Release, 29 September 2018

[NATO Military Chiefs meet to discuss future military strategy](#), NATO News Release, 29 September 2018

[Lieutenant General Hans-Werner Wiermann to become next Director General of the NATO International Military Staff](#), NATO News Release, 29 September 2018

[NATO military chiefs meet in Warsaw](#), Radio Poland, 28 September 2018

NATO Parliamentary Assembly

The Parliament of Canada hosted the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's (PA) 64th Annual Session from 16-19 November 2018 in Halifax, Canada. The Session brought together over 270 parliamentarians from the 29 NATO member countries as well as delegates from partner countries and observers to discuss international security issues affecting the alliance. The second and third days were devoted to meetings of NATO PA's five Committees: Political, Defence and Security, Science and Technology, Civil Dimension of Security and Economics and Security. The Plenary session on the final day was addressed by NATO PA's President, Rasa Juknevičienė, NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller and other senior officials.

Parliamentary debates and resolutions were adopted in the committees on the High North, hybrid warfare, burden sharing, deterrence, space, energy, the South, defence innovation and Russian election meddling. The NATO PA event occurred in conjunction with the Halifax International Security Forum (HISF).

NATO PA delegates also held a special meeting with their counterparts from a dozen parliaments from the Mediterranean, Middle East and the Gulf to discuss the way forward in Iraq and Syria. Other issues debated over the four days included Canada's priorities for NATO and security challenges in the North Atlantic; the role of special operations forces in the current security environment; Arctic resource competition; regional stability in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Black Sea; and the role of women in defence and security. At the closing plenary session British MP Madeleine Moon was elected as President of the NATO PA.

[NATO parliamentarians conclude 2018 with update on US priorities, state of transatlantic relations](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 December 2018

[Greater efforts needed to promote gender mainstreaming in peace and security](#), NATO PA News Release, 19 November 2018

[NATO Parliamentary Assembly sends message of unity, promotes defences against hybrid threats](#), NATO PA News Release, 19 November 2018

[British MP Madeleine Moon elected NATO PA President](#), NATO PA News Release, 19 November 2018

[Deputy Secretary General addresses NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Halifax](#), NATO News Release, 19 November 2018

[NATO warned Russian election meddling an evolving threat that must be met](#), CBC, 18 November 2018

[European reliance on Russian energy under the spotlight at NATO PA session](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 November 2018

[Lawmakers denounce Russian election meddling, urge stronger defences](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 November 2018

[No Time to Relax on Budgets, R&D, NATO allies warned](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 November 2018

[NATO encouraged to sustain Baltics, Poland force longer term](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 November 2018

[Russia, extremism in Middle East the biggest threats facing NATO: Deputy Secretary General](#), Global News, 18 November 2018

[Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan warns voters that Russia will meddle in 2019 Canadian election](#), The Globe and Mail, 18 November 2018

[Sustained efforts are needed from the Alliance to tackle challenges on its Southern flank](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 November 2018

[NATO needs a more focused space policy](#), NATO PA News Release, 18 December 2018

[Rasa Jukneviene starts presidency with visit to NATO PA Secretariat and NATO HQ, unveils priorities](#), NATO PA News Release, 26 September 2018

NATO Secretary General

[NATO secretary general: The Cold War is over, but big challenges remain](#), Defense News, 10 December 2018

NATO Summit

Abstract: The NATO Brussels Summit produced a menu of important operational gains for the Alliance to enhance deterrence, project stability, and address unconventional threats. But the summit did little to communicate a clear strategic vision and assuage concerns regarding Alliance cohesion. As NATO nears 70, Allies should focus on tackling growing political challenges that threaten to undermine operational gains. In its eighth decade, NATO faces a fundamental choice. It can confront challenges head-on by undertaking a strategic review process, which would force Allies to have more candid discussions about the future direction and purpose of the Alliance. Or it can choose to maintain the status quo by focusing on operational gains until a more positive political environment emerges. Neither approach is without risk. Yet, one thing is clear: As hostile actors seek to exploit differences among Allies, NATO must ensure that it is positioned to meet growing threats with the necessary resolve.

Steven Keil and Sophie Arts, [NATO After the Brussels Summit: Bruised or Emboldened?](#) GMF Policy Brief No.31, 25 September 2018

Max Shafron, [Trade Tweets for Tangible Results: The 2019 NATO Summit](#), International Policy Digest, 21 November 2018

Nuclear Weapons

A Russian satellite-based mapping company may have accidentally revealed the locations of at least two sensitive NATO facilities in the Middle East, according to a December blog by the Federation of American Scientists. Russia's Yandex Map selectively

blurred out specific sites beyond recognition in Israel and Turkey, including two specific NATO facilities in the latter: the home of Allied Land Command in Izmir and the contours of the strategically-critical Incirlik Air Base, which hosts US B-61 nuclear gravity bombs.

Matt Korda, [Widespread Blurring of Satellite Images Reveals Secret Facilities](#), Federation of American Scientists, 10 December 2018

[NATO policy makers discuss deterrence and nuclear policy](#), NATO News Release, 29 November 2018

Ernie Regehr, [NATO and Nuclear Disarmament – I: NATO's nuclear posture](#), Canadian Defence Policy Briefing Paper, The Simons Foundation, 1 November 2018

Erika Simpson, [NATO: New headquarters, new threats](#), London Free Press, 5 October 2018

Matt Korda, [The only choice is both choices: balancing assurance and coercion in nonproliferation-focused alliance-management strategies](#), The Nonproliferation Review, Vol. 25 No.3-4, 2018, pp. 263-284,

Robert Bell, [The Challenges of NATO Nuclear Policy: Alliance management under the Trump administration](#), Working Paper 105, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 5 October 2018

Monica Montgomery, [NATO Presses Stand on Nuclear Weapons](#), Arms Control Today, September 2018

To varying degrees, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Lithuania and Spain all restrict the transit of nuclear weapons. Negotiating opt-outs from nuclear deterrence and nuclear war-planning for individual members would not pose a challenge to NATO as a nuclear alliance but would instead allow NATO members to join the nuclear ban treaty.

Leo Hoffmann-Axthelm, [Time for Europe Re-Evaluate the Nuclear Treaty](#), Friends of Europe, 18 September 2018

Operations and Missions

Afghanistan

In September 2018 General Austin Scott Miller assumed command of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission from General John Nicholson at a ceremony at mission headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan. A former head of Joint Special Operations Command, Miller arrived in Afghanistan as the United States raised pressure on the Taliban by increasing the number of US forces training and fighting alongside Afghan forces. The United States also increased the number of raids and airstrikes although the Taliban continued to control large swathes of the country. Afghan President Ghani said in November that over 28,000 of his country's forces had been killed in the last four years.

The United States has been pushing to jump-start an Afghan peace process, but faces a Taliban that is at its strongest since being deposed by a US-led military coalition 17 years ago. The Taliban's battlefield successes and territorial gains give it more leverage in talks. In October, the US special envoy to Afghanistan reportedly met with Taliban representatives in Qatar without notifying Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who expressed concern that US talks with the Taliban undermined the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

Parliamentary elections were held in Afghanistan on the 20 October 2018 (having originally been scheduled for October 2016, and then postponed until July 2018). Despite some violence—over 170 people were killed or wounded in attacks throughout the first day of voting—and delays in the opening of some polling stations, reports showed a relatively high voter turnout, estimated to be around 45 per cent, with women participating at around 33 per cent of eligible voters. As at the end of December, the Afghan Independent Election Commission was

still finalizing results of the parliamentary vote.

In November, Sir Nicholas Kay KCMG, UK ambassador to Afghanistan, was appointed as NATO's next Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) in Afghanistan.

In December a US airstrike reportedly killed the highest ranked Taliban commander in southern Afghanistan, Mullah Abdul Manan. NATO foreign ministers reaffirmed in a [statement](#) during their meeting in December the alliance's commitment to stay the course despite mounting Afghan casualties and the slow pace of peace efforts. "Over the past months, we have stepped up our support – with more forces and funding. Because the cost of leaving is bigger than the cost of staying", [said](#) the Secretary General.

NATO wound down combat operations in 2014 and began training and advising Afghan security forces. US forces, which have been in Afghanistan in a counter-terrorism role since 2001, now number around 15,000, although towards the end of the year, in a surprise move, US President Trump [ordered the withdrawal](#) of 7,000 US troops. On the back of similar US troop reductions in Syria, this led to the resignation of US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.

[NATO aware of reports about US troop cuts in Afghanistan](#), Fox News, 21 December 2018

[Afghan President Says Possible U.S. Troop Withdrawal Won't Affect Security](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 21 December 2018

['We're All Handcuffed in This Country.' Why Afghanistan Is Still the Worst Place in the World to Be a Woman](#), TIME, 8 December 2018

[What Happened to this Afghan Prisoner While in the Custody of NATO Troops?](#) New York Times Magazine, 7 December 2018

[Despite Afghan deaths, slow peace efforts, NATO vows to stay](#), Military Times, 6 December 2018

[UK Ambassador Sir Nicholas Kay appointed as new NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan](#), NATO News Release, 5 December 2018

[UK Ambassador to Afghanistan appointed as next NATO Senior Civilian Representative](#), UK Government News Release, 5 December 2018

[Taliban Will Return If NATO Leaves, Stoltenberg Warns](#), TOLO News, 3 December 2018

[Taliban Slaughter Elite Afghan Troops, and a 'Safe' District Is Falling](#), New York Times, 12 November 2018

[NATO Secretary General and top military leaders visit Afghanistan](#), NATO News Release, 7 November 2018

[NATO to continue training Afghan forces despite 'challenges,' alliance chief says](#), Stars and Stripes, 6 November 2018

[Stoltenberg says NATO committed to Afghan mission despite attacks](#), Reuters, 6 November 2018

[Strengthening strategic culture in Afghan defence leadership](#), NATO News Release, 26 October 2018

[NATO Forces Scale Back 'Face-to-Face' Contacts With Afghan Partners](#), Voice of America, 25 October 2018

[NATO Soldier Killed as Concern Rises Over Afghan Insider Attacks](#), New York Times, 22 October 2018

Tom Engelhardt, [\(Un\)Happy Anniversary! 17 Years of War \(and More to Come\)](#), TomDispatch, 21 October 2018

[Taliban attack kills top Afghan officials, US general unhurt](#), ABC News, 19 October 2018

[NATO in Afghanistan: Private military contractors are 'out of the question'](#), Deutsche Welle, 9 October 2018

[NATO contributes to enhanced civilian oversight of Afghan armed forces](#), NATO News Release, 27 September 2018

[Airstrikes blamed for 21 Afghan civilian deaths in 2 days](#), CBS News, 26 September 2018

[Resolute Support to provide backup to ANDSF during elections](#), Tolo News, 23 September 2018

[The Death Toll for Afghan Forces Is Secret. Here's Why](#), New York Times, 21 September 2018

[NATO base in Kabul is building more amid open-ended US commitment](#), Stars and Stripes, 17 September 2018

[As New U.S. Envoy Appointed, Turbulent Afghanistan's Hopes of Peace Persist](#), International Crisis Group Commentary, 5 September 2018

Nick Turse, [The U.S. Military is Winning. No, Really, It Is! A Simple Equation Proves That the U.S. Armed Forces Have Triumphed in the War on Terror](#), TomDispatch, 4 September 2018

['Time for This War in Afghanistan to End,' Says Departing U.S. Commander](#), New York Times, 2 September 2018

[Change of Command at NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan](#), NATO News Release, 2 September 2018

Iraq

NATO is training local Iraqi forces and a new training mission was officially launched at the July 2018 NATO Summit. The training mission is being led by Canada. NATO conducted a four-day workshop in October 2018 to strengthen the Iraqi security forces' ability to plan and conduct missions and tasks outlined in the country's national security strategy.

[NATO launches new training mission In Iraq as concerns over Iran rise](#), Al Arabiya, 16 November 2018

[Canada-led NATO mission in Iraq begins](#), Kurdistan24, 2 November 2018

[NATO helps Iraq to strengthen its force planning capacity](#), NATO News Release, 21 October 2018

Kosovo

Two decades after the withdrawal of Serbian forces, Kosovo's security is still guaranteed by 4,000 NATO troops, known as KFOR. In December, Kosovo's parliament voted to turn its lightly-

armed emergency response force into a 5,000-strong professional military. Serbia views this decision as a threat to Kosovo's 120,000-strong ethnic-Serb minority.

Serbia does not recognise Kosovo, which declared independence 10 years ago. For NATO the vote is also problematic. "I regret that the decision to initiate a change of the Kosovo Security Force mandate was made despite the concerns expressed by NATO", said Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. He warned that the Western military alliance would have to "re-examine the level of NATO's engagement with the Kosovo Security Force". The United States, however, backed the formation of a Kosovan army.

[Appathurai: Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue the only path for Kosovo to join NATO](#), European Western Balkans, 18 December 2018

[Kosovo votes to transform civil defence force into formal military structure](#), New Europe, 16 December 2018

[Kosovo's army dreamers enrage their Serbian neighbours](#), BBC News, 14 December 2018

[Kosovo Parliament Votes to Create an Army, Defying Serbia and NATO](#), New York Times, 14 December 2018

[Serbia talks up armed intervention as Kosovo approves new army](#), The Guardian, 14 December 2018

[Kosovo premier, NATO chief speak amid Serbia tensions](#), Kait8.com, 6 December 2018

[Statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following conversations with President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia, and Mr. Ramush Haradinaj of Kosovo](#), NATO News Release, 6 December 2018

[Kosovo Votes to Create National Army Over Serb Objections](#), Epoch Times, 19 October 2018

[NATO Urges Kosovo to 'Consult Fully' on Army Plans](#), Balkan Insight, 5 October 2018

[Roadblock by Kosovo war veterans hinders Serbian presidential visit](#), Euro News, 9 September 2018

Libya

The NATO-led coalition's military intervention in Libya in 2011, ostensibly to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, continues to be a contentious issue. Proponents cite it as an example of the responsibility to protect principle and others accuse NATO of imperialism. (Also see the Norway section below).

William Blum, [Lest We Forget, One of Washington's Greatest Crimes: the NATO Intervention in Libya](#), Foreign Policy Journal, 29 September 2018

Populism and NATO

Recent elections in several European countries witnessed the rise of populist movements, most of which share Eurosceptic, isolationist, and often pro-Russian stances. However, to date very little of this populist sentiment has been directed at NATO.

David Deulofeu Antúnez, [NATO's Trojan Horse: How Democratic Deconsolidation and Populism are Weakening the Alliance](#), International Affairs Review, 28 November 2018

President Trump and the Transatlantic Bond

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and many government officials and commentators across the alliance have articulated the importance of the 'transatlantic bond' and how it has been strengthened in NATO. However, President Trump's nationalistic 'America first' agenda and 'shaking of the NATO tree' suggests that such a bond may only be skin deep and close to breaking point.

In September, Jens Stoltenberg, visited Washington to work to shore up the support of US lawmakers. He met with members of Congress, including

members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and members of the NATO Observers Group—a group of pro-alliance lawmakers revived in 2017 by Kay Bailey Hutchison, the American ambassador to NATO.

[Trump blindsides allies at NATO](#), Politico, 23 December 2018

[Here's how Donald Trump took shots at NATO in 2018 — and it spurred Jim Mattis to quit in protest](#), Business Insider, 21 December 2018

Tomáš Valášek, [Europe will never feel safe with a Trump White House](#), Politico, 21 December 2018

Ben Hodges, [Why the United States Needs a Cohesive NATO](#), GMF Policy Brief No.37, 7 December 2018

Gil Barndollar, [Time for President Trump to elevate America's interests in discussions about NATO](#), The Hill, 3 December 2018

Rajan Menon, [Shattering Europe? Why Trump's Paris Fiasco Really Matters](#), TomDisaptch, 18 November 2018

[Trump torches allies, threatens NATO pullout after tense WWI memorial trip to Paris](#), Military Times, 14 November 2018

[Trump Renews Attacks on NATO and Trade Imbalances](#), New York Times, 12 November 2018

Ian Lesser, [Perhaps Some Good News for NATO, but Little Else](#), GMF Commentary, 23 October 2018

Thierry Tardy, [The Internal Nature of the Alliance's Cohesion](#), ISN blog, 18 October 2018

Jyri Raitasalo, [Uneven Burden-Sharing Isn't NATO's Biggest Problem](#), The National Interest, 11 October 2018

[NATO Secretary-General Reacts To Trump's Speech](#), NPR, 25 September 2018

Sten Rynning, [A Europeanized NATO? The Alliance Contemplates the Trump Era and Beyond](#), War on the Rocks, 25 September 2018

Hans Binnendijk, [Despite infighting, here's how NATO can persevere](#), Defense News, 20 September 2018

[On the Campaign Trail for NATO, With Secretary General Stoltenberg](#), Defense One, 14 September 2018

[Secretary General: NATO supports the prosperity, values and security of the United States](#), NATO News Release, 14 September 2018

[In Face of Trump Criticism, NATO Works to Build Conservative Support](#), New York Times, 14 September 2018

Must Read: Madeleine Schwartz, [The end of Atlanticism: has Trump killed the ideology that won the cold war?](#) The Guardian, 4 September 2018

Sven Biscop, ["Stand Firm and Hold the Handrail": A Traveller's Impressions of a Summer of Summitry](#), Egmont Security Policy Brief No.99, September 2018

Russia-NATO relations

Relations between Russia and NATO have deteriorated to record post-Cold War lows. Both sides have competing explanations for this. Within the alliance, there remain disagreements about the nature of the Russian threat and how to respond to it. The Chief of Russia's General Staff, General of the Army Valery Gerasimov, and NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Curtis Scaparrotti, discussed European and global security issues at a meeting in Baku in December. The two military commanders also briefed each other on major operational training activities planned in 2019.

Ted Galen Carpenter, [NATO Partisans Started a New Cold War With Russia](#), The American Conservative, 27 December 2018

Misha Savic, [Here's NATO's Next Turf War With Russia](#), Bloomberg, 13 December 2018

David Axe, [Study: A Russia-NATO War Would Pit Bombers, Aircraft Carriers and Submarines Against Each Other](#), National Interest, 12 December 2018

[Top Russian, NATO generals discuss European security](#), TASS, 12 December 2018

[NATO's Original Purpose: Double Containment of the Soviet Union and "Resurgent" Germany](#) - French told U.S. that West Germany could join NATO as long as there was 'no independent Wehrmacht' - State Department intelligence saw NATO as

a 'place' to help West Germany 'satisfy its reasonable aspirations and contain any potential unreasonable ones', National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 652, 11 December 2018

Based on the available evidence, a more accurate portrait of Russia would depict a more or less normal great power pursuing its own interests, sometimes in concord with the West and other times not, but usually in alignment with at least some Western countries. Moreover, the Russian establishment's views both of international order and of what constitutes national interest do not differ fundamentally from those of the harder-headed members of the West's own security establishments....

The red lines on both sides have been clear at least since 2014, and possibly as far back as 2008. It is understood that NATO will not defend any country that Russia might attack, and that Russia will not attack any country that NATO might defend. This leaves both sides—unlike the great powers before 1914—free to employ the rhetoric of confrontation without running the risk of actual catastrophic war...

Nurturing a fear of Russia does not merely distract attention from the problems that are weakening and dividing the West, but by doing so helps to make them worse.

Must Read: Anatol Lieven, [The Dance of the Ghosts: A New Cold War with Russia Will Not Serve Western Interests](#), *Survival*, Vol. 60:5, 2018, pp.115-140

David Shimer, [Smaller Democracies Grapple with the Threat of Russian Interference](#), The New Yorker, 8 December 2018

[Russian Activity Remains High on NATO's Eastern Border](#), Aviation Online, 29 November 2018

[NATO arranges Russian experts' visit to Brussels for dialogue](#), TASS, 17 November 2018

[Lavrov threatens NATO over Estonian missile accident](#), New Eastern Europe, 6 November 2018

Valentin Vasilescu, [Fake news: Nato's "interception" of Russian planes](#), Voltairenet.org (blog), 5 November 2018

Adam Cabot, [Fortress Russia: How Can NATO Defeat Moscow's A2/AD Strategy and Air Defenses?](#) The National Interest, 3 November 2018

Dmitri Trenin, [Mapping Global Strategic Stability in the TwentyFirst Century](#) - Hybrid War: Russia vs. the West Twentyfirst Century Strategic Stability, Carnegie Moscow Center, 1 November 2018

[Moscow chides NATO for retreating to policy of deterrence, blocking cooperation](#), TASS, 1 November 2018

[NATO-Russia Council meets in Brussels](#), NATO News Release, 31 October 2018

Michael Cecire, [NATO Is Focusing on the Wrong Russian Threat in Eastern Europe](#), World Politics Review, 26 October 2018

James Stavridis, [Putin's Big Military Buildup Is Behind NATO Lines](#), Bloomberg, 20 October 2018

[Russia Warns Sea of Azov Off-Limits to US, NATO Ship Drills](#), Military.com, 20 October 2018

Magnus Nordenman, [How Russia's Sub-Launched Missiles Threaten NATO's Wartime Strategy](#), Defense One, 9 October 2018

Veronika Víchová and Jakub Janda, [The Prague Manual: How to counter the Kremlin's influence in Europe](#), German Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper, No. 22/2018

Steven Keil, [Managing the Russian Challenge on NATO's Borders](#), GMF Blog, 1 October 2018

[NATO Chief, Russian FM Lavrov Agree To 'Continue Contacts'](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 25 September 2018

[AP Interview: NATO chief plays balancing act with Russia](#), Washington Post, 25 September 2018

Alexander Gabuev, [Why Russia and China Are Strengthening Security Ties](#), Carnegie Moscow Center, 24 September 2018

[SACEUR General Scaparrotti has phone call with Russian Chief of General Staff](#), SHAPE News Release, 21 September 2018

Alexander Roberds and Bradley Hanlon, [Kremlin Containment: Moscow's Ongoing Asymmetric Attempts to Obstruct NATO Enlargement](#), GMF Blog, 21 September 2018

Ase Gilje Østensen and Tor Bukkvoll, [Russian Use of Private Military and Security Companies - the implications for European and Norwegian Security](#), Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 11 September 2018

Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance

For the first time insight can be gained as to which countries profit the most from NATO contracts. Almost 400,000 contracts that the UN, NATO and the World Bank procure with companies have been visualized by a group of NGOs in the Netherlands: see [OpenMultilaterals.org](#).

[Norway, Switzerland, the UK and EU sign Building Integrity arrangement for 2019-2022 with NATO](#), NATO News Release, 18 December 2018

[Almost 400.000 contracts of NATO, UN and World Bank are now available](#), Open State, 11 October 2018

[NATO introduces e-learning to its Building Integrity programme](#), NATO News Release, 28 September 2018

Women, Peace and Security

NATO first published an action plan in 2007 to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In July a new NATO/EAPC Policy and Action Plan was endorsed by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit, and in September the [plan](#) was made public.

Clare Hutchinson, [The resilience of Resolution 1325](#), NATO Review, 9 November 2018

[NATO highlights importance of Women, Peace and Security in UN Security Council debate](#), NATO News, 25 October 2018

[NATO Deputy Secretary General visits Azerbaijan for major Women, Peace and Security Conference](#), NATO News Release, 21 September 2018

Security News from NATO Member States:

Albania

NATO will spend over \$58 million on the first stage of turning the military airport at Kucova into a support base for logistics, training and exercises.

[Deputy Secretary General thanks Albania for contributions to NATO](#), NATO News, 14 December 2018

[Nato nation Albania publicly posting sensitive intelligence data online](#), The Independent, 8 December 2018

[Albania's graveyard of MiGs to become NATO air base](#), Reuters, 12 October 2018

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's government has approved a plan to celebrate 15 years of NATO membership in 2019 (and NATO's 70th anniversary) including a documentary film, lectures and an exhibition.

[Bulgaria to hold celebrations in 2019 of 15 years of Nato membership](#), Sofia Globe, 27 December 2018

Canada

Canada's air force lacks enough combat aircraft to meet its North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) or NATO requirements, according to Canadian government auditors. In December, it was announced that up to \$20 million has been earmarked to enable Canada to rejoin NATO's Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AWACS) programme, reversing earlier cuts.

Scott Taylor, [Time for military to reflect on 2018 miscues](#), The Chronicle Herald, 31 December 2018

[Mattis resignation not likely to damage Canada-U.S. security ties: experts](#), Richmond News, 21 December 2018

Michael Peck, [Why Canada's Jet Fighter Problems Mean Trouble for the U.S. \(and the F-35\)](#), National Interest, 8 December 2018

[Ottawa earmarks \\$20M to rejoin NATO airborne surveillance program](#), CBC, 4 December 2018

[Canada's defence spending questioned at NATO parliamentary meeting](#), CBC, 17 November 2018

Stéfanie von Hlatky, Canada's Pledge to Latvia and the Bigger NATO Bargain, RUSI Newsbrief, 26 October 2018

Robin Collins, [NATO: Canada in or out?](#) Canadian Pugwash Group, 10 October 2018

[U.S. NATO rep veers off Trump's script, praises Canada's contributions to alliance](#), CBC News, 2 October 2018

David J. Bercuson, [NATO has problems \(but it's not who's spending what\)](#), National Post, 4 September 2018

Croatia

Defence Ministers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia signed a MoU at the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in October (see above) to create a Multinational Special Aviation Program, which will establish a new training centre in Zadar, Croatia by the end of 2019 dedicated exclusively to training air crews, who will insert and extract Special Operations Forces.

[NATO helicopter training centre to be opened in Zadar](#), Total Croatia News, 4 October 2018

[Croatian Navy taking part in NATO 'Sea Guardian'](#), IHS Jane's Defence Weekly, 14 September 2018

[Croatian Ship Joins NATO Operation in Mediterranean](#), Balkan Insight, 3 September 2018

Denmark

[Denmark's defense minister: NATO at 70 — not a time to retire](#), Defense News, 10 December 2018

[Danish Journo Slams Bill Effectively 'Criminalizing Attitudes Critical of NATO'](#), Sputnik, 21 October 2018

Estonia

Estonia's military is prioritizing the purchase of a midrange air defence system to plug a capability gap its defence minister called the result of a "total oversight" by NATO. During a Washington trip in September, Estonian Defence Minister Jüri Luik told Defense News that NATO made a strategic mistake in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union by not building up air defence capabilities, outside of rotational deployments of aircraft.

[Estonia's defense minister: NATO needs to act on short notice](#), Defense News, 10 December 2018

[Estonia eyes mid-range air defense systems to rectify NATO 'oversight'](#), Defense News, 12 September 2018

France

In September, French Defence Minister Florence Parly questioned US President Donald Trump's commitment to Europe in a speech, saying "Can we always count, in every place and in every circumstance, on American support?"

[France and UK must strengthen links 'to hedge against Trump'](#), The Guardian, 8 November 2018

[France wonders: Can we always count on American support?](#) Defense News, 14 September 2018

[France admits systematic torture during Algeria war for first time](#), The Guardian, 13 September 2018

Germany

The German military is to receive an extra \$6.5 billion in funding for 2020 in a revised budget plan announced in November. The move comes with Berlin under heavy pressure from Washington to step up funding for its military to meet NATO's 2 per cent of GDP goal for military spending.

[German Army Considers Recruiting Foreign Citizens](#), New York Times, 27 December 2018

[Angela Merkel's apparent successor questions Nato spending targets](#), The Telegraph, 2 December 2018

Ulf von Krause, [The 2-Percent Objective and the Bundeswehr Discussion about the German Defence Budget](#), Federal Academy for Security Policy, Working Paper, No. 23/2018

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[NATO military drills: Germany sends largest contingent](#), Al Jazeera, 29 October 2018

James D. Bindenagel and Philip A. Ackermann, [Germany's Troubled Strategic Culture Needs to Change](#), GMF Commentary, 15 October 2018

Nele Achten, [Germany's Position on International Law in Cyberspace](#), Lawfare blog, 2 October 2018

Matt Pickles, ['There was a lot of fear': how Heidelberg changed when the US army left town](#), The Guardian, 27 September 2018

Behnam T. Said and Hazim Fouad, [Countering Islamist Radicalisation in Germany – A Guide to Germany's Growing Prevention Infrastructure](#), ICCT Policy Brief, 26 Sep 2018

Detlef Puhl, [Strategic Autonomy for Europe Can Berlin and Paris Agree?](#) Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper, No. 8/2018

[Merkel: NATO needs to strengthen its defense capabilities](#), Reuters, 14 September 2018

Philipp Lange, [A New NATO Command in Germany Modelled on the Bundeswehr Joint Support Service](#), Federal Academy for

Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper, No. 10/2018

[U.S. Will Send 1,500 More Troops To Germany, Despite Trump's NATO Stance](#), Newsweek, 8 September 2018

Greece

In September it was reported that the United States is in preliminary talks with Athens to expand its military base presence in Greece, potentially a signal that tensions with Ankara are calling into question the long-term viability of Incirlik air base in Turkey.

U.S. Eyes Military Expansion in Greece Amid Strains With Turkey, Wall Street Journal, 11 September 2018

[Stoltenberg urges Greece, FYROM to ratify Prespes agreement](#), Ekathimerini.com, 10 September 2018

[NATO Secretary General discussed current security challenges with Greek Prime Minister](#), NATO News Release, 7 September 2018

Hungary

The [dispute](#) between Hungary and Ukraine remains unresolved. It began over a so-called Language Law passed by Ukraine's Parliament to promote the use of the Ukrainian language. Western Ukraine has a multi-ethnic population, among them ethnic Hungarians. The Polish and Romanian minorities have negotiated and received concessions; Hungary (with local lobbyists) has not been willing to compromise. Budapest gave an ultimatum and are linking the matter to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration efforts. Budapest continued to veto sessions of the NATO-Ukraine Commission.

[Minister Szijjártó: Hungary to continue blocking NATO-Ukraine Commission](#), UNIAN, 5 December 2018

[Hungary to continue blocking Ukraine-NATO Commission](#), UNIAN, 19 November 2018

[Hungarian FM says to continue blocking Ukraine's NATO integration](#), Xinhuanet.com, 26 October 2018

[Hungary increases its scientific cooperation with NATO](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2018

[United States calls on Hungary not to oppose NATO-Ukraine Commission](#), UNIAN, 2 October 2018

Iceland

In October, NATO exercises took place in Sandvík, Southwest Iceland and at Keflavík airport as part of the larger Trident Juncture exercise (see military exercises section above). Iceland's civilian law enforcement Coast Guard (consisting of about 220 personnel runs the NATO Iceland Air Defence System, which feeds into the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System, as well as the NATO Control and Reporting Centre that informs the Combined Air Operations Centre.

[Iceland Embracing Its Strategic Location By Supporting NATO Air Defense](#), USNI News, 24 October 2018

Andie Fontaine, [NATO Exercises Damaged Virgin Forest In Iceland](#), Reykjavik Grapevine, 22 October 2018

[NATO commemorates Battle of the Atlantic as US forces arrive in Iceland](#), NATO News Release, 17 October 2018

[NATO Sends 6,000 Marines to Reykjavík This Week](#), Iceland Review, 15 October 2018

[NATO Warships Headed for Iceland This Week Amid Planned Protests](#), Guide to Iceland, 15 October 2018

[Iceland to be Overrun by NATO Exercises, Reviving Anti-Militarist Sentiment](#), Grapevine, 19 September 2018

Italy

At the end of November, the Italian Air Force declared it had achieved initial operational capability for its squadron of F-35 combat aircraft, the first unit in Europe to achieve the certification.

[Italy's F-35s First To Achieve IOC in Europe](#), Aviation Online, 2 December 2018

[Italy takes up NATO air patrols over Iceland](#), NATO News Release, 4 September 2018

Latvia

From 9-11 September, the Latvian Defence Academy hosted NATO exercises "Steadfast Pyramid 2018" and "Steadfast Pinnacle 2018" in Riga. Attended by 58 senior and flag officers (officers of high rank) from NATO member states and Finland, the exercises were intended to boost senior and flag officers' ability to plan and lead joint operations.

[Riga the location of NATO's Steadfast Pyramid](#), LSM.LV, 7 September 2018

Lithuania

In September, Lithuania's main political parties committed to increasing defence spending every year for the next decade, reaching at least 2.5 percent of GDP by 2030, making it one of the few NATO countries to go beyond the target of 2 per cent of GDP on defence.

[Lithuania's defense minister: It will be a good year for NATO](#), Defense News, 10 December 2018

[Lithuanian, US, NATO battalion troops test new firing range in Pabrade](#), Baltic Times, 21 September 2018

[Lithuania commits to spending 2.5 pct of GDP on defence by 2030](#), Reuters, 10 September 2018

Netherlands

In September, the Netherlands expelled two Russian men accused of plotting a cyber attack on a Swiss research facility analyzing nerve agent samples linked to the recent assassination of a former Russian spy in Britain. Also in September, police in the Netherlands arrested seven men believed to be conspiring to carry out a major terrorist attack using weapons and explosives.

In December, the Netherlands government published its national plan on the NATO Defence Investment Pledge—seemingly the first NATO member state to do so. This plan includes the government commitment to increase defence spending but airbrushes out the nuclear sharing role.

[The Netherlands publishes national plan on the NATO Defence Investment Pledge](#), NATO Watch News Brief, 21 December 2018 - the first NATO member state to make plan publicly available; - plan airbrushes out nuclear role

[National plan on the Defence Investment Pledge - the Netherlands](#), 14 December 2018

[Netherlands government approves NATO national plan](#), Netherlands Ministry of Defence News Release, 14 December 2018

Ekaterina Shirobokova, [The Netherlands and the prohibition of nuclear weapons](#), *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol 25:1-2, 2018, pp. 37-49

[Netherlands police arrests foil 'major terrorist attack'](#), BBC News, 27 September 2018

Norway

The [report](#) (in Norwegian) on Norway's involvement with Libya in 2011 was released on the 13 September. The commission behind the report was led by former Conservative politician Jan Petersen. The report confirms that Norway lacked independent information when deciding to engage in Libya, and shows the decision was based on what was known from other countries and NATO. Norway was at the forefront of NATO's operation, and bombed the country from 24 March to 1 August 2011 together with seven other countries. Norwegian planes dropped 588 bombs, accounting for between 15 and 18 per cent of the bombing before the government put an end to the operation. The bombing raids helped rebels overthrow Muammar Gaddafi's regime. Libya has been unstable since.

The largest NATO-held exercise in Norway since the 1980s was held in September. Trident Juncture (see 'military exercises' above) tested both NATO's response forces, ability to assist a member country and Norway's ability to receive large amounts of allied reinforcements. Norway (and Finland) accused Russia of GPS signal jamming during the exercise.

[Finland, Norway press Russia on suspected GPS jamming during NATO drill](#), Defense News, 16 November 2018

[Norwegian warship collides with oil tanker following NATO exercise](#), Defense News, 9 November 2018

[Norway uses Exercise Trident Juncture to strengthen its national resilience](#), NATO News Release, 6 November 2018

[Despite NATO Tensions, Norway and Russia Sign Seismic Treaty](#), Maritime Executive, 29 October 2018

[NATO's biggest exercise since Cold War draws protests in Norway](#), The Tribune, 28 October 2018

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[Russian buildup worries Norway before big NATO military exercise](#), Reuters, 2 October 2018

[The Norwegian Libya Commission: An Important Report, But We're Still Missing Answers](#), PRIO (blog), 25 September 2018

[Norway Attempted Secret Peace Amid NATO Bombings of Libya in 2011 – Reports](#), Sputnik, 24 September 2018

[Norwegian Politicians Regret 2011 Libya Bombing as Report Finds It 'Ill-Advised'](#), Sputnik News, 14 September 2018

[NATO arrives in Norway](#), Norwegian Armed Forces, 10 September 2018

Poland

In September, US President Donald Trump said he is "seriously considering" a Polish request that Washington build a new military base in the country. However, the viability of such a plan has its critics, including

within Poland and NATO. For example, Retired General Ben Hodges [said](#) any new US military base in Poland must be part of a "cohesive" NATO plan, because "all allies will have to bear some of the consequences" of Russia's reaction, he warned.

Sebastien Roblin, [Is the Super K2 Black Panther Tank \(That North Korea Hates\) Headed to NATO?](#) National Interest, 15 December 2018

[NATO enhances scientific cooperation with Poland](#), NATO News Release, 26 November 2018

[Ex-NATO chief backs permanent US base in Poland](#), Radio Poland, 2 November 2018

[Polish FM to discuss US troop presence with NATO chief](#), Radio Poland, 22 October 2018

[Poland needs more NATO troops: defence minister](#), Radio Poland, 29 September 2018

[Russian Deputy FM: US Base in Poland Will Dismantle NATO-Russia Founding Act](#), Sputnik News, 26 September 2018

[US-Poland base plans must include NATO, says ex-Pentagon official](#), Deutsche Welle, 19 September 2018

Leonid Bershidsky, [Fort Trump Sets a Dangerous Precedent](#), Bloomberg, 19 September 2018

[US military base in Poland could fuel tensions between NATO and Russia](#), Deutsche Welle, 19 September 2018

[Fort Trump: Is a new US military base in Poland a realistic option?](#) Deutsche Welle, 19 September 2018

[Charting Russia's role in Poland's path to NATO](#), Deutsche Welle, 17 September 2018

[If Russia ever acts against NATO, US soldiers at Suwalki Gap may be first to fight back](#), Stars and Stripes, 13 September 2018

John Schindler, [Poland Stands Up For the West Against Russia—Again](#), Observer, 9 September 2018

Romania

In October, Romania voiced concern over increased Russian military activity in the Black Sea which it borders and said strengthening European defence

would be a major theme when it assumes the rotating EU presidency in January 2019.

[NATO member Romania warns of increased Russian activity in Black Sea](#), Reuters, 10 October 2018

Slovenia

Slovenia become the only NATO country with a woman as head of its army following the appointment of Maj Gen Alenka Ermenc as chief of staff in November.

[Nato state appoints first female head of armed forces](#), BBC News, 27 November 2018

[Secretary General thanks Slovenia for its contributions to NATO](#), NATO News Release, 9 October 2018

[Address](#) to the National Assembly of Slovenia by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 9 October 2018

[Joint press conference](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Marjan Šarec, 9 October 2018

Spain

In September, Spain reversed its decision to cancel arms sales to Saudi Arabia after pressure from Riyadh. Spain had initially announced the cancellation of the delivery of 400 laser-guided bombs bought by Saudi Arabia, expressing concern that they could be used against Houthi rebels in Yemen. Spain is the fourth largest provider of military equipment and weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Also in September, the political party Podemos obtained a commitment from the Spanish government to sign the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in exchange for their support on the 2019 budget. The government has not yet announced how and when they will implement this decision.

[Spanish Navy signs up for two NATO carrier group exercises](#), Jane's Navy International, 20 December 2018

[NATO completes Super Puma deliveries to Spain](#), Jane's Defence Weekly, 20 December 2018

[Could Spain be the first NATO State to sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty?](#) ICAN, 6 December 2018

[Spain makes U-turn on laser-guided bomb sales to Saudi Arabia](#), The Guardian, 13 September 2018

[Spain cancels bombs sale to Saudi Arabia amid Yemen concerns](#), AP, 4 September 2018

Turkey

In mid-December, Turkey threatened to launch a military operation against the Kurds in northern Syria. Turkey has been threatening to attack the northern Syrian city of Manbij for more than a year. Currently occupied by US troops and the US-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—an alliance of primarily Kurdish and Arab militias that have helped the United States fight the Islamic State—the situation was thrown into further flux when US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of over 2,000 US troops from Syria.

Since a failed coup in Turkey two years ago, it is [estimated](#) that 120,000 people have been discharged or suspended from the military, police and bureaucracy. In addition, thousands of Turkish military officers were jailed without due process by President Erdogan, especially those trained by NATO and stationed abroad. Turkey's release of US pastor Andrew Brunson in October eased tensions between Ankara and Washington, but US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also urged Turkey to release a Turkish-US citizen and former NASA scientist, among other detainees.

Turkey's pending procurement of a Russian surface to air missile system continues to be another contentious

issue with the United States and other NATO allies. "The US Government has made clear to the Turkish Government that purchasing the S-400 would have unavoidable negative consequences for US-Turkey bilateral relations, as well as Turkey's role in NATO," the US DoD said in November.

[Are Turkey, Syria squaring off in response to US decision?](#) Al Monitor, 29 December 2018

Muhittin Ataman, [Why two NATO allies still harbor mutual distrust](#), Daily Sabah, 25 December 2018

[Turkey primed to start offensive against US-backed Kurds in Syria](#), The Guardian, 12 December 2018

Tony Capaccio, [Turkey's F-35 Role at Risk If It Buys From Russia, Pentagon Warns](#), 28 November 2018

[DoD report to Congress on Status of the U.S. Relationship with the Republic of Turkey](#) (unclassified summary), November 2018.

Barçın Yinanç, [Turkey will marginalize itself in NATO with the S-400s purchase](#), Hurriyet Daily News, 25 October 2018

[After pastor's release, U.S. presses Turkey on ex-NASA scientist, other detainees](#), Reuters, 17 October 2018

[Turkey to make defense deals with any country, NATO member or not: Erdoğan](#), Daily Sabah, 27 September 2018

[NATO stuck in the middle of a messy, multi-billion dollar weapon sale between Turkey, Russia and the US](#), CNBC, 17 September 2018

[Turkey's S-400 purchase 'national decision': NATO chief](#), Hurriyet Daily News, 15 September 2018

Mehmet Yegin, [Toward a Serious Rupture in the U.S.-Turkey Alliance?](#) GMF On Turkey, No.10, 14 September 2018

Kemal Kirisci, [Turkey Might Not Like the West, But Needs It](#), Lawfare, 4 September 2018

Ilter Turan, [Avoiding Further Deterioration in Turkish-U.S. Relations: Less Emotion, More Wisdom](#), GMF On Turkey No.9, 4 September 2018

Adam Bensaid, [US impasse with Turkey threatens NATO's strategic interests](#), TRTWorld, 3 September 2018

United Kingdom

A report by the UK public accounts committee in September found that past decisions delaying maintenance at the Ministry of Defence's 13 sites that support nuclear submarines had left the programme "not fit for purpose". The Trident nuclear missile programme could also be adversely affected by Brexit because of the reliance on imported material from EU countries and difficulties bringing engineers from the continent, the report said.

At the end of September, the UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced a new Defence Arctic Strategy, acknowledging the increasing opportunities and threats the region presents.

In October, it was announced that women will be allowed to apply for all military roles in the British armed forces, including in frontline infantry units, the Royal Marines and special forces units, including the SAS and SBS. In November it was announced that foreign Commonwealth nationals will be allowed to join the British armed forces despite never having lived in the country, as part of plans to help stem a worsening recruitment crisis. It is hoped the changes will lead to an extra 1,350 people joining every year.

In November, the British army undertook a four-week test of over 70 examples of futuristic technologies, including enhanced surveillance drones and unmanned vehicles. It was reportedly the largest such test of these types of weapons that the UK has ever conducted.

Also in November, the UK Government announced that it would double the F-35 fleet of combat aircraft after ordering 17 more aircraft. Due to be delivered between 2020 and 2022, this

latest order will complement the 16 British aircraft currently based at RAF Marham and in the United States, as well as two additional aircraft which are already on order.

In December, the Secretary of State for Defence released the MoD's long-awaited Modernising Defence Programme (MDP) [report](#), after an almost six-month delay. At 28-pages—including 10-pages of graphics—the report appears to reinforce the Government's shifting strategic focus towards countering state-based threats (namely Russia).

“For so long – literally for decades– so much of our national viewpoint has actually been coloured by a discussion about the European Union. This is our moment to be that true global player once more – and I think the Armed Forces play a really important role as part of that.

UK Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, [Defence in the Media](#), 31 December 2018

Liam Walpole, [The Government's Defence Review: An Incomplete Picture](#), Oxford Research Group (blog), 20 December 2018

Ministry of Defence, [Mobilising, Modernising & Transforming Defence: A Report on the Modernising Defence Programme](#), December 2018

Ian Davis, [How much does the UK spend on nuclear weapons](#), BASIC Research Report, November 2018

Sophia Besch, [Brexit negotiations in the field of defence: Lessons learnt and moving forward](#), Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper, No. 31/2018.

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[Army start biggest military robot exercise in British history](#), Defence Secretary announces, UK Government News Release, 12 November 2018

[Britain funds research into drones that decide who they kill, says report](#), The Observer, 10 November 2018

Joel Rogers de Waal, [The Decision to Go to War: How the British Public Misunderstands Its Legal Basis](#), RUSI Commentary, 6 November 2018

[Foreign nationals to be allowed to join British army](#), The Guardian, 5 November 2018

Richard Reeve, [ORG Explains #7: The UK Military in the Arctic](#), October 2018

[All roles in UK military to be open to women, Williamson announces](#), The Guardian, 25 October 2018

[Ministry of Defence grounds fleet of 16 F-35 fighter jets](#), The Guardian, 11 October 2018

[UK troops deploy on largest NATO exercise in a decade](#), UK MoD News Release, 10 October 2018

[Brexit aside, British troops test ability to reinforce Europe](#), Reuters, 10 October 2018

[Defence Secretary announces new Defence Arctic Strategy](#), MoD News Release, 30 September 2018

Toby Fenwick, [\(Dis\)Continuous Deterrence: Challenges to Britain's Nuclear Doctrine](#), BASIC, September 2018

[British spies 'hacked into Belgian telecoms firm on ministers' orders'](#), The Guardian, 21 September 2018

[UK's nuclear deterrent infrastructure 'not fit for purpose', say MPs](#), The Guardian, 21 September 2018

House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, [Ministry of Defence nuclear programme](#), Sixty-First Report of Session 2017–19, HC 1028, 21 September 2018

Megan Karlshoej-Pedersen, [When is the UK at War?](#) Oxford Research Group, 20 September 2018

[UK tests life-saving chemical detection robots and drones](#), UK MoD News Release, 17 September 2018

[UK bolsters support to NATO mission in Afghanistan](#), MoD News Release, 4 September 2018

United States

War on terror

In September it was reported that the CIA is broadening its drone operations in Africa, moving aircraft to a small commercial airport in northeastern Niger to hunt Islamic militants in southern Libya. The move marked an expansion of the powers that were scaled back during the Obama administration and later restored by President Trump.

President Trump has sharply escalated the use of armed drone strikes around the world. In 2009 and 2010, Obama launched 186 drone strikes on Yemen, Somalia, and especially Pakistan. In 2017 and 2018 (to end of November), the Trump administration launched 238 drone strikes in those three locations.

The US-led war on terror has resulted in the violent deaths of as many as 507,000 people in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, according to [a study](#) from Brown University. If indirect deaths are counted, the figure rises to more than 1 million. The Trump administration's defence strategy shifts the emphasis in military planning from fighting terrorism to deterring and/or defeating "revisionist" states: Russia and China in particular, but also Iran and North Korea.

Cyber security

In September, the US Department of Defense (DoD) released an unclassified [summary](#) and [fact sheet](#) on its 2018 Cyber Strategy, which replaces the [2015 DoD Cyber Strategy](#). The Trump administration has rescinded Obama-era guidelines governing the use of offensive cyber weapons, and National Security Adviser John Bolton told reporters that offensive operations have been authorised. While the details remain classified, the new policy appears to move authority for launching offensive cyber weapons down the chain of command.

In October, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) released its [report](#) for the Senate Committee on Armed Services examining the cyber security of the Defense Department's weapon systems. GAO investigators "routinely found mission-critical cyber vulnerabilities" in those systems. The GAO did not make any recommendations in the report, but said it would continue to evaluate the issue.

The United States Cyber Command is reportedly engaging in its first cyber-operation against Russia with the goal of protecting US elections. In October, US Cyber Command was reportedly targeting individual Russian operatives to tell them that they have been identified and their work is being tracked. US officials said the operation is part of a larger campaign to dismantle Russian influence in elections.

Military spending

A slew of major defence contracts were awarded in the last week of the fiscal year, including:

- the next-generation MQ-25 carrier-based tanker (Boeing);
- the Air Force's UH-1N replacement helicopter (Boeing and partner Italy's Leonardo, \$2.38 billion contract);
- a fleet of 351 next-generation T-X fighter/bomber trainers for the Air Force (Boeing and partner Sweden's Saab, \$9.2 billion contract);
- the booster for a next-generation, Vulcan Centaur rocket (Blue Origin);
- the 11th batch of F-35s (Lockheed Martin, \$11.5 billion contract) comprising 141 new aircraft and pushing the cost of the F-35A conventional variant to \$89.2 million per unit; and
- ten Flight III Arleigh Burke-class destroyers (Huntington Ingalls Industries and Bath Iron Works, \$9 billion contracts).

The US defence spending bill for 2019 was agreed in September with \$674 billion being allocated to fund the military (a \$19.8 billion increase from 2018). In December, President Trump reportedly agreed to a proposed \$750 billion defence budget for the coming year shortly after he wrote on Twitter that military spending had reached “crazy” levels.

Troop withdrawal in Syria and resignation of Defense Secretary

In December, the Trump administration ordered the withdrawal of approximately 7,000 troops from Afghanistan and nearly 2,000 troops from Syria. The orders will reduce the US military presence in Afghanistan by approximately half and in Syria, if implemented, would amount to a full withdrawal. Defense Secretary James Mattis resigned in the wake of the two decisions. In his [resignation letter](#), Mattis emphasised the strength the United States derives from alliances. His resignation will take effect in February.

Danny Sjursen, [The World According to the “Adults in the Room”: A Year of Forever War in Review](#), TomDispatch, 23 December 2018

[Exit of trusted Mattis sparks concern among U.S. allies](#), Reuters, 21 December 2018

Matt Taibbi, [We Know How Trump’s War Game Ends](#): Nothing unites our political class like the threat of ending our never-ending war, Rolling Stone, 21 December 2018

[U.S. to Withdraw About 7,000 Troops From Afghanistan, Officials Say](#), New York Times, 20 December 2018

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[Trump commits to \\$750 billion defense budget](#), CNN, 9 December 2018

[Trump calls US defense spending ‘crazy!’ months after signing bill to increase it; seeks talks with Xi and Putin to halt the arms race](#), CNBC, 3 December 2018

Philipp Lange, [Reliability beyond Trump Tweets: The US military contribution in Europe](#), Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper, No. 18, 2018

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Spencer Ackerman, [Trump Ramped Up Drone Strikes in America’s Shadow Wars](#), Daily Beast, 25 November 2018

[State Department clears \\$944 million in missiles for Japan, NATO](#), Defense News, 20 November 2018

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Lieutenant General Norman Seip (Ret.), [Our military bases are not ready for climate change](#), The Hill, 2 November 2018

[Pentagon’s NATO Policy Chief Steps Down](#), Foreign Policy, 31 October 2018 - Thomas Goffus, the US Defense Department’s top civilian overseeing Europe and NATO policy, is expected to join the Senate Armed Services Committee

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William Hartung, [Trump's Space Force: Smoke and Mirrors or a Step Towards War in Space?](#) TomDispatch, 25 September 2018

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Elias Groll, [Trump Has a New Weapon to Cause 'the Cyber' Mayhem](#), Foreign Policy, 21 September 2018

[The Pentagon's Cyber Strategy: What's New and What it Means](#), The Cipher Brief, 20 September 2018

Rajan Menon, [Yemen's Descent into Hell: A Saudi-American War of Terror](#), TomDispatch, 18 September 2018

[U.S. Air Force Seeks 24% Increase In Force Size To Support Trump Defense Strategy](#), Forbes, 17 September 2018

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[Bipartisan group of lawmakers introduce resolutions to rename NATO headquarters after John McCain](#), ABC News, 6 September 2018

NATO is facing, however, one of its most difficult crises in seven decades....

The crisis is one of allied trust and confidence in America's leadership of NATO

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[Rand Paul Skeptical of Letting Macedonia Into NATO, Questions Montenegro's Accession Last Year](#), Roll Call, 5 September 2018

We are grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for a £18,000 grant over 24 months to further the work of NATO Watch

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