

Issue 59 October 2023

Promoting a more transparent and accountable NATO



www.natowatch.org

NATO Watch Observatory

No. 59 (October 2023)

Published by
NATO Watch
Gairloch, Scotland
IV212DS

Editor: Dr. Ian Davis

Welcome to the NATO Watch bi-monthly *Observatory*: the only online publication dedicated entirely to news and independent commentary on NATO policy-making and operational activities. The clips are drawn from a wide range of subscriptions, feeds and alerts covering a substantial part of the major English language newspapers and other periodicals worldwide.

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 and the Israel-Hamas war

Addressing the 75th Nordic Council session in Oslo, Norway, on 31 October 2023, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [condemned](#) Hamas' terrorist attacks on Israel and underlined the importance of Israel's response taking place within international law, that civilians are protected, and of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza. He stressed that the war must not escalate into a major regional conflict. "We must not give up working for a lasting, political peace solution," he said, underlining that the war in Gaza "must not lead to a weakening of our will and ability to support Ukraine."

Earlier on 11 October Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant [briefed](#) NATO Defence Ministers by video conference "on the atrocities by Hamas perpetrated against Israeli civilians and the nationals of several NATO allies", as well as Israel's ongoing response. Images of dead infants were included in a [video](#) played to the ministers. "They were horrific pictures of the attacks and the victims of the attacks", Stoltenberg told reporters, saying it "confirmed the brutality of the attacks".

The ministers also made it clear that Israel has "the right to defend itself with proportionality", and they called for Hamas to immediately release all hostages, and for the fullest possible protection of civilians. When pressed to do so at the ministerial meeting, the NATO Secretary General refused to say whether Israel's response so far was proportionate, including cutting off supplies of fuel, electricity and water to Gaza and its civilian population. "NATO as an alliance is not directly involved", he [said](#) in response, and reiterated that as the "conflict evolves, it is important to protect civilians". He added, "There are rules of war. There are the requests for proportionality. And this was highlighted by many allies".

In recent weeks unity within NATO on this issue has begun to fray, with several member states taking a harder line towards Israel. Most notably, Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan [told a crowd](#) in Istanbul on 28 October that "Israel has been openly committing war crimes for 22 days, but the Western leaders cannot even call on Israel for a cease-fire, let alone react to it". "We will tell the whole world that Israel is a war criminal", he added. Israel said it was recalling its diplomats from Turkey in the wake of Erdoğan's comments.

In addition, Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store on 29 October [called](#) Israel's response to the attack by Hamas "disproportionate" and called for an immediate ceasefire. Similarly, Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez [called](#) for a ceasefire and an Israel-Palestine peace summit. Criticism of Israel has also been expressed in [Croatia](#).

NATO and Israel have worked together for almost 30 years in domains such as science and technology, counter terrorism, civil preparedness, countering weapons of mass destruction and women, peace and security. In recent years, cooperation has grown, principally through the [Mediterranean Dialogue](#) a partnership forum formed in 1994 that aims to contribute to security and stability in the wider Mediterranean region.

Direct involvement in the war by NATO seems unlikely. But in an [interview](#) with *The Telegraph* on 17 October, Ehud Olmert, the former Israeli prime minister, said a NATO intervention force could be used to "restore" the Gaza Strip once the war with Hamas is over. Olmert said international support was needed to create "some kind of normal life" in Gaza, such as NATO forces being tasked with preparing the Strip for a handover to the Palestinian Authority.

As a result of this latest crisis in the Middle East, NATO will be obliged to give higher priority to counterterrorism and potential spillovers of political violence from Europe's southern neighbourhood. Some of these challenges were noted in the 2022 Strategic Concept and recent summits but were a lower priority than the war in Ukraine, the threat from Russia and competition with China. NATO will now need to adjust its priorities to resolve these competing demands.

News, Commentary and Reports:

Arctic Security

Backstory

The Arctic region, or High North, strategically important during the Cold War became less significant after the end of the confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. However, due to both the warming climate in the Arctic and the re-emergence of geopolitical competition in the region, the Arctic is once again of growing strategic importance. Climate change is reportedly occurring at a faster rate than previously thought, which will have a significant impact on the Arctic and on the security of Arctic littoral states. Several members of the Arctic Council have announced a significant strengthening of defence capabilities in the Arctic.

New developments

On 20 and 21 October 2023, the Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Bauer attended the 10th edition of the Arctic Circle Assembly. In his keynote speech he expressed concern about the “increased competition and militarisation in the Arctic region, especially by Russia and China”, before explaining that NATO’s own new Regional Plan North, administered by Allied Joint Force Command in Norfolk, would provide “greater Arctic defence coherence” and ensure “that forces and equipment can flow between the continents in conflict and peace and protects our freedom of navigation”.

[Nato’s Military Leader: “We Must Be Prepared for Military Conflicts Arising in the Arctic”](#), High North News, 30 October 2023

[Admiral Bauer: “Arctic remains essential to NATO’s Deterrence and Defence Posture”](#), EU Today, 23 October 2023

[“Arctic remains essential to NATO’s Deterrence and Defence Posture”, says Chair of the NATO Military Committee](#), NATO News Release, 22 October 2023

Arms Control & Disarmament: the CTBT

On the 25 October Russia’s parliament completed the [passing of a law](#) that withdraws Moscow’s ratification of the global treaty banning nuclear weapons tests, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Russia’s upper house, the Federation Council, approved the law by 156 votes to zero, after the lower house, the Duma, had also passed it unanimously. Russia says it is revoking its withdrawal of the treaty only to bring itself in line with the United States, which signed but never ratified the treaty.

The US warned that Russia revoking its ratification of the treaty will endanger “the global norm” against nuclear testing. On 5 October President Putin [suggested](#) that Russia could resume nuclear testing for the first time in more than three decades. Robert Floyd, the executive secretary of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty Organization—the international watchdog on nuclear tests—raised [concerns](#) about Russian intentions after Putin’s remarks. “It would be concerning and deeply unfortunate if any state signatory were to reconsider its ratification of the CTBT,” Floyd said on 6 October.

During his press conference at the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in Brussels on 11 October (see below), the NATO Secretary General [said](#): “Russia’s nuclear rhetoric throughout this conflict has been, and continues to be, reckless and dangerous. And Russia must know that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought... So far, we haven’t seen any changes in their nuclear posture that require any changes in our nuclear posture. But of course, Russia’s announcement on revoking ratification of the comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, demonstrates Russia’s lack of respect, and the continued disregard for its international commitments”. Stoltenberg added that “NATO allies have upheld this norm against nuclear testing for over 25 years and we have no plans to start testing again”.

President Putin had previously announced on 21 February that Moscow would suspend its

participation in the New START treaty, threatening the end of the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and Russia, while the United States [announced](#) on 1 June that it will stop providing Russia with some notifications required under the treaty, including updates on missile and launcher locations.

Artin Dersimonian, [Our nuclear guardrails are slowly melting away](#), Responsible Statecraft, 24 October 2023

Dan Smith, Wilfred Wan and Matthew Bunn, [Russia's potential withdrawal from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty underlines the urgent arms control problem](#), SIPRI Commentary, 17 October 2023

Climate Change

Backstory

NATO has recognized climate change as a risk multiplier that heightens other security threats and emphasized the need to green NATO militaries to maintain their technological edge. In June 2021, the alliance agreed a new [Climate Change and Security Action Plan](#), which included four key commitments: an annual Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment; an adaptation strategy; a mitigation strategy; and an outreach strategy. At the 2022 Madrid Summit NATO leaders agreed a new methodology to map military greenhouse gas emissions and concrete targets to cut NATO emissions. The aim is cut emissions by NATO bodies and commands by at least 45% by 2030, and to move towards Net Zero by 2050. A NATO [Centre of Excellence for Climate Change and Security](#) is due to open in Montreal later in 2023.

In general, NATO's work on climate change is to be commended, even though it seems likely to be undermined by the twin pressures of raising military spending and the increases in military exercises as part of efforts to contain China and Russia. Moreover, the poor quality of emissions [reporting](#) in this sector means that no one actually knows whether military carbon emissions are falling or not. According to a [2022 estimate](#), militaries account for about 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

NATO has [reportedly](#) created a methodology for its members states to report their military emissions, but neither the methodology nor any of the resulting data has been made public (and it is not mentioned in NATO's 2023 [Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment](#)).

A key step is thus for member states to calculate the specific carbon footprints of their militaries and then report these figures. More difficult will be persuading all member states to carry out similar climate and carbon reduction actions when climate policies are not equally prioritised across the alliance.

While NATO is encouraging cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation, the focus up until now has primarily been on the resulting security risks and the promotion of energy saving in member states' armed forces. This 'greening of the military' agenda shifts responsibility away from NATO member states to do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for which they are collectively responsible.

New developments

A new report co-published by Centre Delàs and IPPNW Germany examines the impact of NATO's target for all its member states to spend a minimum of 2% of their GDP on the military, and the related target of at least 20% of expenditure on equipment. It looks at the history of the target, how it drives military spending, its impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, its likely overall financial and ecological impacts in the coming decade, and the arms industry that will profit from it. It finds, among other things, that if NATO members increase their spending to 2% GDP, US\$2.57 trillion will be diverted away from climate spending by 2028. This would be enough to pay for climate adaptation costs for all low- and middle-income countries for seven years.

Ho-Chih Lin, Nick Buxton, Mark Akkerman, Deborah Burton and Wendela de Vries, [Climate crossfire: how NATO's 2% military spending targets contribute to climate breakdown](#), Transnational Institute, October 2023

Collective Defence

Backstory

To fulfil NATO's three core tasks (deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security, as set out in the [2022 Strategic Concept](#)), the alliance employs a mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities, complemented by space and cyber capabilities. At successive summits since 2014, NATO leaders have agreed a range of measures to enhance their deterrence and defence posture, including the establishment of an [enhanced Forward Presence](#). The 2022 Madrid Summit [further strengthened](#) conventional deterrence on NATO's eastern front in four ways: (a) a massive increase in the NATO Response Force (NRF) from 40,000 to 300,000 troops with the expectation that the NRF would be placed on high readiness during 2023; (b) more pre-assigned forces, with the eight battlegroups in the eastern part of the alliance (the Forward Presence) increased up to brigade levels—about 3,000 to 5,000 troops in addition to local forces—with foreign forces pre-assigned to specific locations, but not permanently deployed; (c) more pre-positioned heavy weapons, logistics and command-and control assets; and (d) an increase in the US long-term military presence in Europe.

Since February 2022, the United States had already deployed or extended over 20,000 additional forces to Europe in response to the Ukraine crisis, adding additional air, land, maritime, cyber, and space capabilities, bringing its total commitment to more than 100,000 service personnel across Europe. At the Madrid Summit President Biden [announced](#) additional long-term commitments to Europe, including a permanent US 5th Army Corps headquarters in Poland—the first permanent US forces on NATO's eastern flank—and an enhanced rotational force presence in Poland, Romania and the Baltic region.

The Vilnius Summit in July 2023 reaffirmed the decisions at the Madrid Summit, including the scaling up of existing battlegroups to brigade-size units. It also confirmed that the eight

multinational battlegroups are now in place and committed to demonstrating the ability to scale up NATO's military presence “through robust live exercises across the Eastern Flank of the Alliance”. In addition, the Vilnius Summit agreed a new “family” of three regional defence plans: The High North and the Atlantic (led by Joint Force Command Norfolk, in the United States); Central (covering the Baltic to the Alps, and commanded from Brunssum in the Netherlands); and South-East (covering the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and commanded from Naples). Each plan reportedly sets out in more detail what is required given the geography of those regions to deter and defend against the threats. From those plans, force requirements are then drawn up setting out the capabilities required in all domains—space, cyber, land, maritime, and air—to execute those tasks. It is expected to take several years to execute the plans. All these military plans and concepts remain classified. (On criticism of the opaqueness of this process, see [here](#)).

New developments

A new report by the [hawkish](#) and [defence-contractor-funded](#) RAND Corporation argues that current NATO defence capabilities and posture are inadequate for collective defence. The authors argue that the more robust deterrence and defence posture NATO allies are seeking will require sustained investments over the next five years, but also several other steps: developing innovative concepts to defeat aggression, exploiting new technologies, augmenting defence industrial capabilities, better integrating national efforts, and each individual NATO member focusing on specific priorities as part of this collective effort.

Stephen Flanagan and Anna M. Dowd, [Alliance Assignments: Defense Priorities for Key NATO States](#), War On The Rocks, 4 October 2023

David A. Ochmanek, Anna Dowd, Stephen J. Flanagan, Andrew R. Hoehn, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Michael J. Lostumbo and Michael J. Mazarr, [Inflection Point: How to Reverse the Erosion of U.S. and Allied Military Power and Influence](#), Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2023

Counterterrorism

Backstory

Several NATO member states—principally France, Italy, Spain and the UK—have been pushing NATO to address challenges on Europe’s southern flank, especially the rise of instability in Africa. Italy currently hosts [NATO’s Joint Force Command base in Naples](#), which in 2017 opened a south hub focusing on terrorism, radicalization, migration and other issues emanating from North Africa and the Middle East. The 2022 Strategic Concept identified “conflict, fragility and instability” in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel as one of the main threats to the security of NATO member states.

These concerns have taken on an added dimension with both Russia and China extending their influence in the region. The Wagner Group has been active in central and North Africa and the Middle East. In Mali, for example, [Wagner soldiers](#) are filling a void created by the exit of former colonial power France. Similarly, the United States has been [warning](#) that China is trying to build a military naval base on Africa’s Atlantic coast, although currently Beijing only operates one acknowledged foreign military base, located in Djibouti in East Africa.

The Vilnius Summit tasked the North Atlantic Council to “update NATO’s Policy Guidelines and Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism, and reassess, in consultation with our regional partners, the areas where NATO can provide civil-military assistance to partners in this field”. In NATO’s southern neighbourhood, the NAC was tasked with launching “a comprehensive and deep reflection on existing and emerging threats and challenges, and opportunities for engagements with our partner nations, international organisations, and other relevant actors in the region, to be presented by our next Summit in 2024”.

New developments

The NATO Secretary General recently appointed a group of independent experts to support the review of NATO’s approach to its southern neighbourhood. Professor Ana Santos Pinto of Portugal was appointed as

Chair. The group will develop a report to be delivered to the Secretary General ahead of a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in April 2024. The following people have been appointed to the group: Dr Katja Lindskov Jacobsen (Denmark); D. Elie Tenenbaum (France); Ambassador (ret.) Hermann Nicolai (Germany); Dr Thanos Dokos (Greece); Brigadier General Alessio Nardi (Italy); Dr Aleksandra Bukowska-McCabe; (Poland); Professor Ana Santos Pinto (Portugal); Mr Carlos Carnero González (Spain); Ambassador Refik Ali Onaner (Türkiye); and Ambassador Richard B. Norland (United States).

Andrea Mazzarino, [What’s Not Being Said: What War Does to the Nations That Fight It](#), Tom Dispatch, 31 October 2023

[Secretary General welcomes newly appointed experts to address NATO’s southern neighbourhood](#), NATO News Release, 19 October 2023

[Secretary General appoints independent group as part of NATO reflection on southern neighbourhood](#), NATO News Release, 6 October 2023

Cyber Security, Information Warfare & Hybrid Threats

Backstory

While NATO does not have its own cyber weapons, the alliance established an operations centre in August 2018 at its military hub in Mons, Belgium. Several member states 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. At the Vilnius Summit, NATO’s approach to cyber issues was enhanced by the endorsement a new concept to enhance the contribution of cyber defence to NATO’s overall deterrence and defence posture, and a commitment to new national goals to further strengthen national cyber defences. Neither the concept nor the goals were made public. A new Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability (VCISC) was launched “to support national mitigation efforts in response to significant malicious cyber activities”. The first NATO Cyber Defence Conference will be held in Berlin in November 2023

New developments

Currently, NATO is investigating claims by a hacktivist group known as SiegedSec that it breached the alliance's computer systems, potentially for the second time in the last three months. SiegedSec claimed on its Telegram channel on 30 September that it had stolen roughly 3,000 NATO documents and posted six screenshots allegedly showing access to various NATO web pages. The group claimed the 3,000 stolen files total more than nine gigabytes of data and came from the Joint Advanced Distributed Learning platform, the NATO Lessons Learned Portal, the Logistics Network Portal, the Communities of Interest Cooperation Portal and the NATO Standardization Office.

[Empowering NATO's Multi-Domain Operations Through Digital Transformation](#), NATO Act Blog, 16 October 2023

[Cabal of 'gay furry hackers' claims over 3,000 files stolen in NATO website breach](#), PC gamer, 5 October 2023

[NATO investigating breach, leak of internal documents](#), Cyberscoop, 3 October 2023

[NATO says it is addressing an apparent cyberattack after strategy documents posted online](#), CNN, 3 October 2023

Jack Poulson, [British govt funded plan for censorship of factual NATO criticism](#), The Grayzone, 3 October 2023

Counter-Drone Doctrine

NATO is expected to adopt its first-ever counter-drone doctrine by the end of 2023, which will in part advise member states on layered approaches to defend against unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and the common training of operators. According to Claudio Palestini, a senior adviser at NATO's emerging security challenges division: "The formal tasking to create this document was issued at the beginning of this year. It will build on a handbook produced in 2019 that was more focused on outlining guiding principles on how to effectively counter drones".

While some of the content between the doctrine and the handbook, which was never

made public, will be similar, Palestini said the main difference will be within the level of formality and focus. "The 2019 handbook was around 600 pages in length and served as a preliminary document," he said. "The scope of this c-UAS doctrine will be NATO-wide and be much more coherent, condensed into 70-80 pages".

[NATO to adopt first-ever counter-drone doctrine for member nations](#), Defense News, 20 October 2023

Enlargement & Partnerships

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992. This forum for dialogue was succeeded in 1997 by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Bilateral cooperation began when Azerbaijan joined the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994. Azerbaijan has supported several NATO-led peace-support operations.

George Monastiriakos, [Why Azerbaijan should join NATO](#), Geopolitical Monitor, 17 October 2023

Georgia

A 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration promised eventual NATO membership for Georgia – a position reiterated at several NATO summits since. But Russian backed separatists control two breakaway regions—Abkhazia and South Ossetia—and in 2008 Russia invaded Georgia to protect the separatists from what it said was a threat from the Georgian Government. NATO agreed a Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) in 2014, which involves a series of measures aimed at strengthening Georgia's defence capabilities and developing closer security cooperation and interoperability with NATO member states. The SNGP includes a training and relations centre with dozens of NATO trainers.

At the 2022 Madrid Summit, a new set of tailored support measures for Georgia was agreed to reflect the new security environment resulting from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Georgian Defence Minister Juansher Burchuladze on 17 October said about \$135 million had been spent over the

last four years on both construction and renovation projects to ensure “modernised infrastructure at the level of NATO member states” for military personnel of the country.

[Georgian Defence Minister says \\$135mln spent on “NATO-level infrastructure” in last 4 years](#), Azer News, 17 October 2023

Jordan

Jordan has been a member of NATO’s [Mediterranean Dialogue](#) programme since 1995 and became an Enhanced Opportunities Partner shortly after the 2014 Wales Summit. In 2018, NATO launched a Defence Capacity Building Project to enhance Jordan’s capacity in national resilience and crisis management. Jordan has since then been working side by side with NATO on an increasing number of areas, including counter-IED, cyber defence, maritime and border security. NATO and Jordan co-hosted a conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control in Amman on 3 and 4 October 2023. The event was the first of its kind on SALW organised with partner countries, as part of NATO’s defence and related security capacity building package for Jordan.

[NATO Allies and partners address Small Arms and Light Weapons control in Jordan](#), NATO News Release, 5 October 2023

Moldova

Moldova, which lies between Ukraine and Romania, is constitutionally neutral, but has developed stronger links to NATO in recent years. Moldova has faced an unresolved separatist conflict for over 30 years. A contingent of about 1,500 Russian ‘[peacekeepers](#)’ is based in mainly Russian-speaking Transnistria that borders southwestern Ukraine.

Bilateral cooperation between NATO and Moldova started when Moldova joined the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994, but support and dialogue increased after 2006, when the country agreed its first two-year Individual Partnership Action Plan. Moldova has contributed troops to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) since March 2014. A tailored package of

measures under NATO’s Defence and Related Security Capacity Building initiative was agreed in June 2015, and a civilian NATO Liaison Office was opened in Chisinau in 2017 to promote practical cooperation and facilitate support for the country’s reforms. At the 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid, a package of tailored support measures was agreed to help Moldova strengthen its national resilience and civil preparedness.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the Prime Minister of Moldova Dorin Recean to NATO Headquarters on 26 October 2023. He praised NATO and Moldova’s 30-year-long partnership and called on Russia to withdraw its troops from Moldova’s territory. Meanwhile Moldova hosted a military exercise, Rapid Trident 2023, with Romania and the United States on 10-22 September.

[Video: NATO allies train together with partner Moldova](#), Shape News Release, 30 October 2023

[Secretary General meets Prime Minister of Moldova and reaffirms longstanding partnership](#), NATO News Release, 26 October 2023

Policy

Joshua Shiffrin, [What Washington Got Wrong About NATO Expansion in the 1990s](#), CEIP Commentary, 16 October 2023

Maritime Security and Protection of Critical Undersea Infrastructure

Backstory

NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept describes maritime security as the “key to our peace and prosperity”, and NATO’s maritime activities cover all three of the Alliance’s core tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security. NATO’s [maritime activities](#) include Standing Naval Forces, Operation Sea Guardian in the Mediterranean Sea and Aegean Activity (supporting broader international efforts in addressing the refugee and migrant crisis in the Aegean Sea).

At the Vilnius Summit, NATO leaders agreed to establish NATO’s Maritime Centre for the

Security of Critical Undersea Infrastructure within NATO's Maritime Command in the UK. Earlier in 2023, NATO created a Critical Undersea Infrastructure Coordination Cell at NATO Headquarters in Brussels to improve information sharing and exchange best practices.

New developments

On 12 October 2023 NATO Defence Ministers and the Swedish Defence Minister endorsed the Digital Ocean Vision, a pioneering initiative to enhance coordination between national and NATO capabilities employed for maritime surveillance. This includes a broad range of assets from satellites to autonomous systems below, on, and above the sea.

Two suspected acts of sabotage of undersea critical infrastructure occurred in October. First, a fault on the telecommunications cable running between Sweden and Estonia was noticed on 7 October, and the Swedish government [said](#) on 23 October that the damage to the cable was caused by "external force or tampering".

Second, two other incidents in the Gulf of Finland involving the Balticconnector gas pipeline and a communications cable connecting Finland and Estonia occurred on the 8 October. Finland is working with Beijing to find out more about a Russian-owned but Hong Kong registered ship linked to the damage, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo [said](#) on 26 October. Finnish police [recovered an anchor](#), believed to be from the Chinese vessel, that appears to have caused the breach in the Baltic Sea Balticconnector pipeline. Finnish authorities [said](#) on 10 October that it "could not have occurred by accident" and appears to be the result of a "deliberate ... external act". Finland [said](#) on 12 October it could not exclude the possibility that a "state actor" was behind the damage amid what its national security intelligence service called "significantly deteriorated" relations with Russia. The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said the US would support Finland and Estonia as they work to establish the facts surrounding the damage. Similarly, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance would have a

"united and determined response" if it was proved the incident was a deliberate attack. President Putin on 13 October [dismissed](#) the idea that Russia was behind the incident and suggested such claims were made up to divert attention from what he said was a western attack on Nord Stream.

After the incidents NATO stepped up patrols in the Baltic Sea. "The increased measures include additional surveillance and reconnaissance flights. A fleet of four NATO minehunters is also being dispatched to the area", NATO said in a [statement](#).

[A NATO Gas Pipeline Was Attacked, and All the Evidence Points to Russia](#), Popular Mechanics, 30 October 2023

[NATO boosts Baltic patrols after undersea infrastructure damage](#), Reuters, 19 October 2023

[NATO ramps up Baltic Sea patrols after destruction caused to gaspipe and communications cable](#), The Journal, 19 October 2023

[NATO steps up Baltic Sea patrols after subsea infrastructure damage](#), NATO News Release, 19 October 2023

[Ex-Finnish PM Alexander Stubb warns of attempts to 'intimidate' NATO allies after pipeline leak](#), Politico, 13 October 2023

[NATO Defence Ministers launch initiative to enhance maritime surveillance capabilities](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2023

[Nato vows to respond if Finland-Estonia gas pipeline damage is deliberate](#), The Guardian, 11 October 2023

[NATO Floats Idea For Mission Module Approach To Delivering Seabed Warfare Capability](#), Naval News, 4 October 2023

Military Budgets, Procurement and Burden Sharing

Backstory

The burden-sharing debate has been a key issue for NATO in the post-cold war era. The reluctance of many European member states to spend more on defence has been a major grievance of most US presidents. NATO leaders pledged in 2014 to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence. The Vilnius Summit communique commits the member states to invest "at least"

2% of GDP annually on defence, adding, “we affirm that in many cases, expenditure beyond 2% of GDP will be needed in order to remedy existing shortfalls and meet the requirements across all domains arising from a more contested security order” (para 27).

Before the Vilnius Summit, NATO released [expenditure data](#) showing that military spending among its 31 members was expected to increase by 8.3% in real terms in 2023, the highest growth rate in nine successive years of growth. Eleven countries are projected to exceed the 2% of GDP target, led by Poland on 3.9% and the US on 3.49% with the UK tenth on 2.07%. France is expected to spend 1.9% and Germany 1.57%. The NATO Secretary General [said](#) that, since 2014, European allies and Canada had spent an extra \$450 billion on defence. He also noted that in 2014, only three allies spent 2% of GDP on defence. "This year, 11 allies [will] reach — or exceed — the target", he said. "We expect this number will rise substantially next year".

The tweaking of the language of the 2014 investment pledge aims to make NATO's current military spending target of 2% of GDP a *minimum requirement* rather than a goal to aim for. However, there are two fundamental flaws in this approach. First, justifying greater military spending when government budgets have already been ravaged—by restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and because of a growing global economic recession, in part due to the war in Ukraine—is going to be a hard sell. This is especially the case as the burden may well fall on those least able to carry it (i.e., the evidence [suggests](#) that high military spending exacerbates existing inequalities within societies). Second, and the ongoing elephant in the room, while some European member states probably do need to spend more, the United States certainly needs to spend less on the military. A cut of 10% in the [pandemic of Pentagon spending](#), for example, would release more than \$80 billion for other more pressing needs.

New developments

NATO member states are reportedly running out of ammunition to give to Ukraine. Admiral Rob Bauer, the chair of NATO's military committee, [told](#) the Warsaw Security Forum on 3 October that "the bottom of the barrel is now visible", adding that governments and defence manufacturers now had to "ramp up production in a much higher tempo". To this end, at their recent meeting in Paris, NATO allies and partners in the Land Battle Decisive Munitions framework drove forward efforts to increase ammunition stocks. In the run-up to this meeting, the NATO Support and Procurement Agency put framework contracts and orders (worth an estimated at 2.4 billion euros) into place for hundreds of thousands of pieces of key ammunition. These contracts, including 1 billion euros in firm orders, will deliver a wide variety of critical munitions, such as 155mm artillery, anti-tank guided missiles and main battle tank ammunition. The first deliveries under these contracts are scheduled to start towards the end of 2023.

NATO is also pushing its members to overcome protectionist tendencies and agree on a single standard for artillery ammunition to boost production of urgently needed 155mm shells. Admiral Bauer called on member countries to stop protecting national arms makers, whose current business model he compared to that of companies producing printers. According to Bauer, the price for one artillery shell has gone up to 8,000 euros from 2,000 euros before Russia's attack on Ukraine.

Joslyn Brodfuehrer, [NATO's greatest advantage over adversaries is its network of allies and industry partners. Here's how to use it](#), Atlantic Council, 27 October 2023

[Secretary General at NATO-Industry Forum: without industry there is no defence](#), NATO News Release, 25 October 2023

[NATO chief tells allies it's time to increase arms stockpiles, stay on war footing](#), Stars and Stripes, 25 October 2023

[NATO urges common standards and curbs on protectionism to boost artillery output](#), Reuters, 24 October 2023

[Former UK defense chief warns big EU countries won't keep NATO spending pledges](#), Politico, 20 October 2023

[Secretary General at the Conference of National Armaments Directors: Ukraine needs our sustained support](#), NATO News Release, 19 October 2023

Military Exercises

In addition to its annual nuclear exercise 'Steadfast Noon' (see nuclear weapons section below), NATO carried out at least three other military exercises in October: [Northern Challenge 23](#) (an annual, Icelandic Coast Guard-led explosive ordnance disposal exercise), Northern Spirit 2023 (which involved sharing biometrics and identity information in a simulation of NATO-led operations) and an exercise in Latvia designed to secure military 5G communication networks against hacking by adversaries possessing powerful quantum computers (titled '2023 Next-Generation Communication Network Technologies').

[NATO eyes 'quantum-resistant' encryption in 5G drill](#), C4ISRNet, 31 October 2023

[NATO Allied Command Transformation and the Latvian Ministry of Defence Host Next Generation Communication Networks Technology Event](#), NATO ACT News Release, 27 October 2023

[NATO Allies and partners conclude exercises Northern Challenge 23 and Northern Spirit 23 in Iceland](#), NATO News Release, 6 October 2023

NATO Defence Ministers Meeting Brussels, 11-12 October 2023

This was the first NATO ministerial since the NATO Summit in Vilnius in July. It had been largely intended as an evaluation exercise, looking at the state of the alliance ahead of its 75th anniversary summit in Washington in July 2024. However, it took place against the backdrop of violent turmoil in the Middle East and political turbulence in the US Congress, which was holding up approval of aid for Ukraine. Six main issues were discussed: (a) NATO's ongoing support for Ukraine; (b) the situation in the Middle East in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks by Hamas against NATO partner Israel; (c) NATO operations and

missions, including in Kosovo and Iraq; (d) the work underway to resource and exercise the military plans that leaders agreed at the Vilnius Summit to strengthen NATO's long-term deterrence and defence; (e) the recent damage to undersea infrastructure between Estonia and Finland; and (f) ratification of Sweden's membership application. The key decisions and activities were as follows:

- Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with NATO allies and partners in the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group and received assurances of sustained military support.
- Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant briefed his NATO counterparts by videoconference on the war with Hamas. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg condemned Hamas' terrorist attacks and said: "Israel has the right to defend itself and as the conflict unfolds, the protection of civilians is essential".
- The recent deployment of hundreds of extra KFOR troops to Kosovo was discussed. The NATO Secretary General called on Belgrade and Pristina to "behave responsibly, refrain from destabilising actions, and re-engage in the EU-facilitated dialogue".
- The next steps in operationalising NATO's new regional defence plans were discussed, but no new information was provided on the assigned forces and capabilities being assembled. The plans cover the Atlantic and European Arctic; the Baltic region and central Europe; and the Mediterranean and Black Sea. They have not been made public or independently assessed.
- It was noted that NATO will start its annual nuclear exercise "Steadfast Noon" next week.
- The ministers expressed strong solidarity with Estonia and Finland as they work to establish the facts surrounding the damage to critical undersea infrastructure in the Baltic Sea. Secretary General Stoltenberg said NATO would have a "united and determined response" if it was proved the incident was a deliberate attack.
- Ten NATO member states agreed to further develop the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), which aims to bolster European air

and missile defence through joint acquisition projects.

- Two initiatives were signed to strengthen joint air power cooperation: Germany and the UK joined the NATO Flight Training Europe (NFTE) High Visibility Project, bringing the total number of participants to 12; and 13 member states and invitee Sweden signed an agreement to cooperate on cross-border airspace.
- Ministers expressed strong support for a speedy ratification of Swedish accession.
- Assistant Secretary General Thomas Goffus was appointed as NATO's first Special Coordinator for Counterterrorism.

NATO ministerial meeting overshadowed by Israel-Hamas war: Analysis of the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting, Brussels, 11-12 October 2023, [NATO Watch Briefing No.111](#), 14 October 2023

[Cross-Border Collaboration on NATO Flights](#), High North News, 16 October 2023

[Israel releases images of slain children to rally support after Hamas attack](#), Reuters, 13 October 2023

[NATO chief presses Turkey to advance Sweden's membership application](#), Associated Press, 12 October 2023

[Austin Says U.S. Will Supply Military Necessities to Israel, Ukraine](#), US Department of Defense News, 12 October 2023

[Germany, nine other nations push ahead with joint air defence procurement](#), Reuters, 12 October 2023

[Defence Ministers address deterrence and defence, NATO missions, situation in the Middle East](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2023

[NATO Secretary General: "Israel does not stand alone"](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2023

[NATO strengthens joint air power cooperation](#), NATO News Release, 12 October 2023

[NATO assures Zelenskiy of support even as world's eyes turn to Mideast](#), Reuters, 11 October 2023

[Zelenskyy arrives in Brussels for surprise visit ahead of NATO meeting](#), Politico, 11 October 2023

[Ukraine's Zelenskyy joins a meeting of global defense leaders to make a direct plea for military aid](#), Associated Press, 11 October 2023

[Ukraine tells NATO: Forget me not](#), Politico, 11 October 2023

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the first day of meetings of NATO Ministers of Defence in Brussels, 11 October 2023

[NATO Secretary General welcomes Allies' new pledges of support for Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 11 October 2023

[10 NATO Allies take further step to boost European air and missile defence capabilities](#), NATO News Release, 11 October 2023

[Zelensky, at NATO headquarters, denounces Putin and Hamas as terrorists](#), Washington Post, 11 October 2023

[Doorstep statement](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy ahead of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Defence in Brussels, 11 October 2023

[NATO Defence Ministers meet to discuss Ukraine, deterrence and defence, Kosovo and the Middle East](#), NATO News Release, 11 October 2023

NATO Parliamentary Assembly: Annual Session

The [Annual Session](#) of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 6-9 October 2023. More than 250 members of lawmakers from the 31-member states and 20 partners parliaments discussed a range of transatlantic security issues, examined the outcomes of NATO's Vilnius Summit in July and adopted further recommendations for NATO's adaptation. The Assembly [hailed](#) the "biggest ramp up of collective defence in the Euro-Atlantic area in decades" and appealed to member states to continue to boost budgets and arms production.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky joined by via video-link and in his [address](#) to the Assembly appealed for the international rule of law to unite and deal with terrorism, comparing the attack by what he called a "terrorist organisation" on Israel with the similar tactics used by Russia, which he said was a "terrorist state". The Assembly, in return, pledged unrelenting support to Ukraine.

During the Plenary Sitting, leaders and legislators condemned the violence in Israel, and also awarded the Women for Peace and Security Award to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the leader of democratic forces in Belarus.

During the annual session, members also adopted draft [reports](#) in the [Assembly's five Committees](#) and [resolutions](#) distilling the NATO PA's policy recommendations. One the of the Assembly's key goals is for a [Centre for Democratic Resilience](#) to be set up at NATO headquarters – NATO currently has no unique structure dedicated to democratic resilience. NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana said that he and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg “are doing everything we can to enlarge consensus” for the Centre to be set up.

Resolutions:

[Resolution 483](#) - Protecting Allied Democracies and Partners from Disinformation, Committee on Democracy and Security, 9 October 2023

[Resolution 484](#) - Implementing NATO's New Deterrence and Defence Baseline, Defence and Security Committee, 9 October 2023

[Resolution 485](#) - Strengthening Stability and Security in the Black Sea Region, Defence and Security Committee, 9 October 2023

[Resolution 486](#) - Towards the Reconstruction of Ukraine, Economics and Security Committee, 9 October 2023

[Resolution 487](#) - Delivering on the Vilnius Summit Decision, Political Committee, 9 October 2023

[Resolution 488](#) - Enhancing the Protection of Allied Critical Maritime Infrastructure, Science and Technology Committee, 9 October 2023

[During Stockholm Rose-Roth seminar, NATO PA parliamentarians voice strong support for partners at risk](#), NATO PA News Release, 31 October 2023

[Deputy Secretary General thanks parliamentarians for their support to Ukraine at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen](#), NATO News Release, 10 October 2023

[Zelensky's Address to NATO Parliamentary Assembly Receives Standing Ovation](#), Kyiv Post, 9 October 2023

Reports:

[The Russian War on Truth: Defending Allied and Partner Democracies Against the Kremlin's Disinformation Campaigns](#), Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam (France) - Draft General Report, 15 Sep. 2023

[Russia's War Against Ukraine: Strategic Imperatives for NATO](#), Tomas Valasek (Slovakia) - Draft General Report, 13 Sep. 2023

[Towards the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#), Michal Szczerba (Poland) - Draft Report, 12 Sep. 2023

[Novel Materials and Additive Manufacturing](#), Sven Clement (Luxembourg) - Draft Special Report, 12 Sep. 2023

[Troubled Waters – How Russia's War in Ukraine Changes Black Sea Security](#), Lord Mark Lancaster (United Kingdom) - Draft Report, 8 Sep. 2023

[Developing Future Capabilities: Robotics and Autonomous Systems](#), Joe Weingarten (Germany) - Draft Report, 8 Sep. 2023

[Ukraine's Fight for Freedom & Allied and Global Response to Russia's War](#), Rick Larsen (United States) - Draft Special Report, 8 Sep. 2023

[Rebuilding Transatlantic Economic Relations and Resilience](#), Faik Oztrak (Türkiye) - Draft Report, 8 Sep. 2023

[Sea Change: The Rapid Evolution of Baltic Security After Russia's Invasion of Ukraine](#), Jeroen Van Wijngaarden (Netherlands) - Draft Report, 8 Sep. 2023

[Ensuring an Allied Defence Industrial Base for NATO's New Deterrence and Defence Baseline](#), Utku Cakirozer (Türkiye) - Draft General Report, 1 Sep. 2023

[Protecting Critical Maritime Infrastructure – The Role of Technology](#), Njall Trausti Fridbertsson (Iceland) - Draft General Report, 31 Aug. 2023

[The Future of NATO's Open Door Policy](#), Audronius Azubalis (Lithuania) - Draft Report, 28 Aug. 2023

[China's Global Role in the Wake of Russia's War Against Ukraine](#), Ana-Maria Catauta (Romania) - Draft Report, 18 Aug. 2023

[Russia's War on Ukraine and Transatlantic Energy Security Challenges](#), Harriett Baldwin (United Kingdom) - Draft General Report, 17 Aug. 2023

[Food Security and Conflict: Harvesting Resilience in the Face of a Global Crisis](#), Julie Dzerowicz (Canada) - Draft Special Report, 4 Aug. 2023

[Fighting Impunity for Violations of International Law in Russia's Renewed Invasion of Ukraine](#), Rodrigue Demeuse (Belgium) - Draft Report, 13 July 2023

[NATO Parliamentary Assembly: Alliance should stand with Ukraine until its victory](#), Ukrinform, 9 October 2023

[Watch as Zelensky addresses Nato's Parliamentary Assembly amid new Russian attacks](#), Independent, 9 October 2023

[NATO adaptation, Ukraine, Israel attacks & WPS award top agenda as NATO PA wraps up annual session](#), NATO PA News Release, 9 October 2023

[NATO PA sends President Zelenskyy message of strong support "until victory is achieved"](#), NATO PA News Release, 9 October 2023

[NATO PA weighs Ukraine war's impact on energy and trade, says rebuilding must start now](#), NATO PA News Release, 8 October 2023

[NATO Assembly Urges Strong Response to "Deepest Security Crisis" Since WW2](#), NATO PA News Release, 8 October 2023

[NATO PA Bureau statement on today's attacks against Israel](#), NATO PA News Release, 7 October 2023

[NATO countries criticized for cluster munitions use, supply](#), Xinhua, 7 October 2023

[NATO PA backs drive to bolster Alliance Defence and Deterrence](#), NATO PA News Release, 7 October 2023

[NATO PA urges allies to beef up support for Ukraine, help advance its membership quest](#), NATO PA News Release, 7 October 2023

[Doubling down on support for Ukraine, adapting to strategic competition at the heart of NATO PA Annual Session in Copenhagen](#), NATO PA News Release, 4 October 2023

Nuclear Weapons

Backstory

The nuclear component of NATO's deterrence strategy is mainly provided by US nuclear weapons, backed up by the 'independent' nuclear forces of the UK and France. In addition, NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies on US nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe, under so-called [nuclear sharing arrangements](#).

Three factors have increased the recent salience of the nuclear issue. First, the steadily growing risk of a direct military confrontation between Russia and the United States/NATO

included [concerns](#) of escalation to the use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. (Although US officials have frequently said that there was no indication that Russia planned to use nuclear weapons to attack Ukraine).

Second, the deterioration of the security landscape has led to the almost complete collapse of nuclear arms control. In February Russia suspended participation in the [New Start treaty](#), the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and Russia, and in October Russia withdrew its ratification of the CTBT (see above). In addition, NATO has consistently voiced opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which it (incorrectly) claimed at the Vilnius Summit "is at odds with the existing non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, risks undermining the NPT, and does not take into account the current security environment" (para 53).

Third, Russia has [begun](#) to station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, seemingly mirroring NATO's own nuclear weapons sharing arrangements. In response, Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki [stated](#) that Poland wanted to join Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Türkiye in hosting US nuclear weapons.

The Vilnius Summit condemned "Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and coercive nuclear signalling". While NATO resisted calls for (or was unable to reach consensus on) a change in its nuclear posture, the alliance's approach to weapons of mass destruction remains myopic: criticising other actors—Russia, China, Iran and North Korea—for investing in nuclear and missile capabilities, with little transparency or regard for international norms and commitments, but failing to mention the nuclear weapon modernisation programmes of the United States, UK and France. The assumption, of course, is that NATO members are [responsible nuclear-armed states](#). However, US [spending on nuclear weapons](#) is expected to climb by \$140 billion over the next ten years (to a total of \$634 in total over the 2021-2030 period),

while in 2021 the UK [lifted the ceiling](#) on its nuclear weapons arsenal.

Moreover, the situation in Ukraine has exposed the system of [nuclear deterrence as highly unjust and precarious](#). In other words, all nuclear armed states (including those within NATO) pose a threat to peace and security. And as most of the world's states have concluded, the goal of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is a safer and more secure path to take. With global stockpiles of nuclear weapons [increasing](#) for the first time since the end of the Cold War, and the risk of such weapons being used the greatest it has been in decades, NATO appears to be part of the problem.

Nuclear exercise, Steadfast Noon

NATO held its annual nuclear exercise, [Steadfast Noon](#), over Italy, Croatia and the Mediterranean Sea on 16-26 October. It [practiced NATO's nuclear strike mission](#) with dual-capable aircraft and the B61 tactical nuclear bombs the US deploys in Europe, but did not involve any actual nuclear weapons. There are currently an [estimated 100 B61 bombs](#) deployed at six bases in five European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Turkey). Non-nuclear aircraft also participated in the exercise under NATO's so-called SNOWCAT (Support of Nuclear Operations with Conventional Air Tactics) programme, which is used to enable military assets from non-nuclear countries to support the nuclear strike mission without being formally part of it. According to the Secretary General, the exercise helped "to ensure the credibility, effectiveness and security of our nuclear deterrent", as well as sending a "clear message that NATO will protect and defend all allies".

Matthew Evangelista, [Oppenheimer envisioned the tactical use of nuclear weapons. Putin now threatens it](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 23 October 2023

[NATO's nuclear exercises come with risks, warns CND](#), CND, 18 October 2023

William Hartung, [Strategic Posture Review: Echoes of Dr. Strangelove](#), Responsible Statecraft, 16 October 2023

[NATO holds long-planned annual nuclear exercise](#), NATO News Release, 13 October 2023

[NATO Will Hold Major Nuclear Exercise As Russia Plans To Pull Out Of Test-Ban Treaty](#), RFE/RL, 12 October 2023

[NATO will hold a major nuclear exercise next week as Russia plans to pull out of a test ban treaty](#), Associated Press, 12 October 2023

Chris Spedding, [BASIC Brief: Burevestnik](#), 11 October 2023

Ian Davis, [Why do we not know if US nuclear weapons are returning to Lakenheath?](#) Rethinking Security, 10 October 2023

Jacklyn Majnemer and Eva-Nour Repussard, [Fit for Purpose? Next Steps for NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture](#), Wilton Park, September 2023

Jacklyn Majnemer and Eva-Nour Repussard, NATO'S New 'Deterrence Baseline' and the Future of Extended Nuclear Deterrence, Wednesday 19 – Saturday 22 July 2023, Wilton Park [Report](#), WP3131, September 2023

Marina Favaro and Heather Williams, [False Sense of Supremacy: Emerging Technologies, the War in Ukraine, and the Risk of Nuclear Escalation](#), *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, vol. 6, no.1, pp. 28-46, 2023

Operations and Missions

Kosovo

Over two decades after the withdrawal of Serbian forces, Kosovo's security is still guaranteed by NATO troops, known as KFOR. NATO [announced](#) this month that it was boosting KFOR from 4,500 troops to about 5,000—utilizing Bulgarian, Romanian and UK forces—in response to an armed attack at a monastery in northern Kosovo on 24 September that killed a Kosovar police officer and three attackers. Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008 after a guerrilla uprising and 1999 NATO intervention, accused Serbia of arming and supporting the Serb fighters. Serbia, which has not recognised its former province's independence, blamed Kosovo for precipitating violence by mistreating ethnic Serb residents.

The situation was further exacerbated by an alleged military build-up by Serbia on the

border with Kosovo. The White House [said](#) on 29 September that there was an “unprecedented” buildup of Serbian troops and armour along the Kosovo border and called on Belgrade to withdraw them immediately. The Biden administration said it was consulting with allies to ensure KFOR’s posture “matches the threat”. However, Serbia [announced](#) the next day that it had pulled some of its troops back from the Kosovo border after US warnings that it could face punitive measures. The Serbian president, Aleksandar Vučić, said any military action would be counterproductive, adding: “Serbia does not want war”.

[Kosovo asks for more NATO-led peacekeepers along the border with Serbia](#), Associated Press, 18 October 2023

[Additional NATO reinforcements arrive in Kosovo](#), NATO News Release, 14 October 2023

[Romanian troops boost NATO's peacekeeping mission in Kosovo](#), Reuters, 14 October 2023

[Over 130 additional NATO troops arrive in Kosovo](#), Anadolu Agency, 14 October 2023

[NATO reinforcements arrive in Kosovo](#), NATO News Release, 6 October 2023

[Nato needs to re-establish control of northern Kosovo, says Albanian PM](#), Financial Times, 3 October 2023

Iraq

At the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018, the NATO Mission Iraq was launched following a request from the Iraqi government. The new, noncombat training and advisory mission was established in Baghdad in October 2018. In February 2021, the NATO Defence Ministers agreed to scale up the NATO noncombat training and advisory mission in Iraq with thousands of new personnel. The NATO Secretary General confirmed then that the size of the mission would increase from 500 personnel to around 4,000. As was the case in Afghanistan, the United States operates a parallel deployment in Iraq of about 2,500 troops as part of a global coalition supporting local security forces in their fight against the Islamic State. For years, Iraqi militias, some linked to Iran, have carried out periodic attacks on facilities housing US soldiers with the

declared aim of expelling them from the country. The US sometimes retaliates with airstrikes.

Space Policy

Backstory

While NATO owns ground-based infrastructure, it does not have its own space-based assets. Instead, it requires permission to access member states’ satellites (which make up about 65 per cent of the global total of around 2,000 satellites) before they can be used. In June 2019 a new policy or “a common NATO framework” was agreed to “guide” the alliance’s approach to space. While the substance of the policy remains secret, the NATO Secretary General argued that it was “not about militarizing space”, but rather NATO playing an important role “as a forum to share information, increase interoperability, and ensure that our missions and operations can call on the support they need”. At the NATO Leaders’ Meeting in London in December 2019 space was declared as an operational domain alongside land, air and sea. This allows space to be used for military operations during times of war.

At the June 2021 NATO summit, the communiqué expanded the use of the mutual defence clause to include a collective response to attacks in space: “...attacks to, from, or within space” could be a challenge to NATO that threatens “national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security, and stability, and could be as harmful to modern societies as a conventional attack. Such attacks could lead to the invocation of Article 5. A decision as to when such attacks would lead to the invocation of Article 5 would be taken by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis,” (para 33).

New developments

A new article discusses the driving force behind the increased emphasis NATO has placed on space security, with a focus on the legal and policy issues posed by the growing threat posed to allies’ satellites by anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons and cyber-attacks. It also outlines avenues NATO may wish to take to

ensure critical infrastructure is adequately protected by norms of international law.

David Eagleson, [Protecting our critical satellite infrastructure: the importance of space-based infrastructure to humanity and its status within NATO](#), NATO Review, 24 October 2023

Summits

The next NATO Summit will be held in Washington, D.C. in 2024 (for NATO's 75th anniversary), followed by a meeting in the Netherlands in 2025.

Luke Coffey, [NATO Needs Results If 75th Anniversary Summit Is To Be A Success – Analysis](#), Eurasia Review, 21 October 2023

[Summit prepares ground for a more militarized Europe, future Ukrainian membership and expansion into the Indo-Pacific](#), NATO Watch Briefing No.109, 17 July 2023

Sweden's Accession to NATO

Backstory

Finland and Sweden were invited to join NATO, after a [trilateral memorandum](#) with Turkey agreed on the eve of the NATO Madrid Summit assuaged Ankara's previous objections. While Finland went on to become a NATO member in April following Türkiye's ratification of its Accession Protocol, Sweden continues to wait on the ratification by Türkiye and Hungary.

Turkey has made its approval conditional on Stockholm cracking down on exiled Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers a threat to its national security. At the NATO Vilnius Summit a new agreement was reached between the parties, although the timing of the Turkish parliament's green light for Sweden remained unclear and was further complicated by the apparent linkage with US F-16 combat aircraft sales to Türkiye. Ankara sought to buy \$20 billion worth of F-16s and nearly 80 modernisation kits for its existing warplanes in October 2021, but the US linked the sales with Turkish ratification of Sweden's NATO membership bid.

New developments

On 23 October Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [moved forward](#) a parliamentary proposal to ratify Sweden's accession to NATO, putting Stockholm one step closer to joining the alliance. But another obstacle [remains](#): Hungary, whose ruling party has accused Swedish officials of telling "blatant lies" about the state of the country's democracy, pushed back a vote on the issue until at least next month. One ruling party lawmaker said there was "little chance" that Hungary would ratify Sweden's accession to NATO this year. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Stockholm on 24 October 2023 to discuss finalising Sweden's NATO accession. The Secretary General welcomed the decision of President Erdoğan to submit the accession protocol to the Grand National Assembly.

[Sweden in NATO: How NATO Membership Could Change Stockholm's Strategic Posturing](#), The Arctic Institute, 31 October 2023

[Explainer: Why Turkey's Erdogan finally initiated Sweden's NATO ratification](#), AI-Monitor, 28 October 2023

[Hungary Seeks Swedish Explanation Ahead of NATO Approval](#), The European Conservative, 27 October 2023

[Turkey F-16 sale not a done deal, even with Sweden's NATO bid on track](#), Defense News, 27 October 2023

[Turkish parliament set to discuss ratifying Sweden's NATO membership](#), Reuters, 25 October 2023

[Secretary General welcomes latest steps towards Sweden's NATO accession](#), NATO News Release, 24 October 2023

[Hungary in the spotlight after Turkey presses on with Sweden's bid to join NATO](#), Associated Press, 24 October 2023

[With eye on U.S., Turkey in no rush to back Sweden's NATO bid – sources](#), Reuters, 17 October 2023

[Saab supports NATO underwater exercises with underwater systems](#), Naval Today, 17 October 2023

[Sweden says it'll consider sending Gripens to Ukraine only after NATO membership](#), Breaking Defense, 6 October 2023

Ukraine

Backstory

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in a major escalation of the armed conflict that began in 2014. Ukraine has now mounted a counteroffensive, but progress is slow and attritional, with little prospect of a breakthrough before the winter sets in. NATO member states are co-belligerents in the war, having provided significant quantities of weapons to Ukraine, including main battle tanks, missiles, ammunition. Most of the military assistance has come in the form of bilateral arms transfers, training and other support, which is being coordinated by the US-led Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which meets on an ad hoc basis and involves Ministers of Defence and senior military officials from Western-aligned states from around the world. Separately, NATO is strengthening a 2016 [Comprehensive Assistance Package](#) for Ukraine with both short-term assistance (ranging from fuel, protective equipment to portable anti-drone systems and secure communications) and longer-term support (to help modernize the Ukrainian armed forces to NATO interoperability standards and strengthen its defence and security institutions).

At the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest the alliance stated that Ukraine (and Georgia) would become members but avoided any specific timetable or pathway. NATO remains divided on the issue, and at the Vilnius Summit the issue was fudged once again with the promise to Ukraine of accelerated membership once things look better. Two of the agreed new measures for bringing Ukraine closer to NATO were the setting up of a NATO-Ukraine Council and removing the requirement for a Membership Action Plan.

New developments

See [Update 52](#): Russia's war with Ukraine, NATO Watch, 31 October 2023

Security News from NATO Member States:

Canada

A civilian worker sexually assaulted by a NATO soldier has been told she should have realized she faced such dangers when accepting a job supporting Canada's military mission in Latvia, according to documents obtained by the Ottawa Citizen newspaper. Meanwhile, a new report by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute explores NATO's growing interest in energy security, and concludes that Canada is readily placed to assume a leadership position in implementing NATO's plans for energy security, in both the military and civilian sectors.

[Canadian Forces worker sexually assaulted at NATO base told she should have realized such risks existed: documents](#), Ottawa Citizen, 5 October 2023

Andrew Erskine and Alexander Landry, [Canadian Implications in NATO's Renewed Energy Security Role](#), Canadian Global Affairs Institute, September 2023

Finland

Finland's recent decision to join NATO represents a significant transformation in the country's foreign and security policy. There have been numerous articles discussing this shift and its likely implications for Finland, NATO and regional security.

John C. K. Daly, [Finland Establishes Itself Within NATO to Moscow's Dismay](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol 20 Issue 160, 17 October 2023

[With Finland in NATO, Russia restructures forces, depriving the Northern Fleet of the status as a military district](#), Barents Observer, 10 October 2023

[Russia 'Reacts' to NATO Increase in Membership, Threatens Finland and Baltic States](#), Kyiv Post, 9 October 2023

[Finland joins NATO: A major shift in foreign security policy](#), Helsinki Times, 7 October 2023

Germany

Germany has long been criticised by its allies for its resistance to increasing its defence spending. This position has been reinforced by a strong pacifist sentiment among the electorate linked to Germany's Nazi past. But in the wake of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, said a fund of €100bn would be set up to boost the strength of the country's armed forces, and he also announced a sustained increase in defence spending over the coming years. In August this year, however, it was [reported](#) that the German government had retreated from a plan to legally commit itself to meeting NATO's 2% military spending target on an annual basis.

This month, Spiegel news magazine, citing evidence from an internal finance ministry document, claimed that the German government is using "accounting tricks" to meet NATO's military spending target in 2024. Expenditures by seven government ministries, the chancellery of Olaf Scholz, and both houses of parliament are being counted as contributions to defence spending. The biggest single contribution - 11.2 billion euros - comes from the finance ministry, the report says, adding that the sum includes 4.5 billion euros in interest payments, which the ministry justifies by saying that military equipment was purchased with debt. The cost of government pension payments to former members of the National People's Army of the communist German Democratic Republic, which was reunified with then West Germany in 1990, are also being counted as contributions, the report says.

[Germany uses accounting tricks to reach NATO spending target, der Spiegel reports](#), Reuters, 13 October 2023

Hungary

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán [said](#) on 26 October that he was proud to keep communications open with Moscow after [angering fellow EU leaders](#) by meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin on 17 October for [talks](#) in China involving representatives of 130 countries (to discuss China's Belt and Road

initiative). "We keep open all the communication lines to the Russians. Otherwise, there will be no chance for peace," Orbán told reporters ahead of a meeting of EU leaders in Brussels. "This is a strategy. So we are proud of it".

Images of Orbán shaking hands with Putin were "very, very unpleasant" and defied logic given Budapest's past history with Moscow, the Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas [said](#) on 18 October. The French President, Emmanuel Macron, also condemned Orbán's meeting and handshake with Putin. "In the situation we are in with Russia, we should not use these bilateral contacts to negotiate things about ourselves that would weaken our unity [on Ukraine]", Macron [said](#) after the EU leaders' meeting on 27 October. Orbán is seen as the key potential opponent to a decision due in December on whether to open EU accession talks with Ukraine, which would require the unanimous backing of the bloc's 27 members.

[Mysterious: Orbán told NATO, EU he COULD NOT EVADE a meeting with Putin](#), Daily News Hungary, 28 October 2023

[Minister: Hungary faithful ally in NATO, EU](#), Daily News Hungary, 21 October 2023

[NATO Diplomats Discuss Growing Concern Over Hungary's 'Deepening Relationship With Russia' At Budapest Meeting](#), RFE/RL, 19 October 2023

Netherlands

Outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said on 28 October he would be interested in succeeding Jens Stoltenberg as Secretary General of NATO, although he only saw a small chance of being picked for the job. Stoltenberg has been in post since 2014 and is due to step down in October 2024. His term was [extended](#) in July for a fourth time, as the alliance's 31 member countries opted to stick with an experienced leader rather than try to agree on a successor amidst Russia's war in Ukraine.

[Dutch PM Rutte builds an early head of steam for NATO's top job](#), Politico, 31 October 2023

[Dutch PM Rutte signals interest in NATO top job](#), Reuters, 28 October 2023

Poland

After the Polish parliamentary elections on 15 October, the three main opposition parties gained a healthy majority -- 248 out of 460 seats in the lower chamber -- and are set to form a coalition of pro-democracy forces. This will likely spell an end to the eight-year rule of the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party, even though it scored the highest result in the election, winning 35% of votes and translated into 194 seats. The period of PiS rule was defined by Warsaw sparring with EU institutions and member states over concerns Poland was backsliding on democracy, as well as aligning with Hungary against Brussels on a range of issues, including migration policy. The Polish people [voted in even greater numbers](#) than when the nation ousted Communist authorities in 1989 with opposition leader and former Prime Minister Donald Tusk declaring the 'beginning of a new era' for his country.

Marcin Zaborowski, [Poland has shown how to defeat populism](#), Euractiv, 23 October 2023

Daniel Hegedüs, [And Then There Was One](#), GMF Commentary, 18 October 2023

Marta Prochwicz-Jazowska, [No Free Pass: Poland's Next Government Must Also Be Held to Standards](#), GMF Insights, 18 October 2023

Marta Prochwicz-Jazowska, [Exit Right: Polish Election Appears to Herald a Seismic Political Shift](#), GMF Insights, 15 October 2023

Anna Wójcik, [How the Integrity of Poland's Elections Is Undermined](#), GMF Insights, 12 October 2023

Annabelle Chapman, [Poland's Elections Are Making Everyone Sweat](#), World Politics Review, 12 October 2023 (paywall)

Michał Baranowski and Marta Prochwicz-Jazowska, [Too Close to Call—Poland's 1989 Moment](#), GMF Commentary, 10 October 2023

Slovakia

On 26 October Slovakia's new populist, pro-Russian Prime Minister, Robert Fico, [said](#) his three-party coalition government was ending military aid to Ukraine, fulfilling one of his central campaign pledges. He said he had told the head of the European Commission about

this move at a meeting before the EU [summit in Brussels](#). Fico also told other EU leaders that €50 billion EU aid to Ukraine should include guarantees that the funds would not be misappropriated, his office [said](#) on 27 October. "Ukraine is among the most corrupt countries in the world", he claimed. The recent election [saw a victory](#) for Robert Fico, a three-time former prime minister who campaigned on a promise to end military aid to Ukraine.

[Fico Government's Anti-NATO Stance Worries Eurocrats](#), The European Conservative, 25 October 2023

Patrik Szicherle, [What is the path forward for Slovakia's Hungarians?](#) Centre for Democracy & Resilience & Globsec, 24 October 2023

United States

Two Republican presidential candidates, Donald Trump and Vivek Ramaswamy have openly talked about withdrawing the United States from NATO. Ramaswamy in a brief statement on 23 October said "It's a reasonable idea that I have considered", when asked about a Rolling Stone story earlier detailing former President Trump's openness to withdrawing from the alliance.

[Ramaswamy says pulling out of NATO 'reasonable'](#), The Hill, 24 October 2023

[Trump Plots to Pull Out of NATO — If He Doesn't Get His Way](#), Rolling Stone, 22 October 2023

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