

Remarks

by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the joint press conference with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu

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(As delivered)



Minister Çavuşoğlu, dear Mevlüt,

it is really great to be back in Ankara and to meet you again. And thank you for the very warm welcome.

Turkey is a valued NATO Ally, making important contributions to our shared security.

Turkey showed solidarity with Allies and partners during the pandemic by providing substantial support in our common fight against COVID-19.

You are one of the largest contributors to

our training mission in Afghanistan, which is helping to create the conditions for peace.

You are also part of our missions in Kosovo and Iraq. And you play a major role in the fight against terrorism. So Turkey is a valued Ally, contributing to NATO in many different ways.

NATO also contributes to the security of Turkey.

By augmenting your air defence against missile attacks from Syria.

And by increasing our air and naval presence.

Poland has announced as you mentioned, it is deploying a maritime patrol aircraft.

And other Allies are also planning to increase their support for Turkey.

So NATO remains strongly committed to Turkey's security.

Today, we discussed the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

We have now established a military de-confliction mechanism to reduce the risks of incidents and accidents in the region.

This includes a commitment to use a secure hotline that has been set up between Greece and Turkey, available 24/7.

The mechanism was achieved through the constructive engagement of Turkey and Greece at NATO Headquarters.

I welcome this and pay tribute to both Allies for their efforts. And we stand ready to develop it further. The de-confliction mechanism can help to create the space for diplomatic efforts.

It is my firm hope that the underlying disputes can now be addressed purely through negotiations.

In the spirit of Allied solidarity and international law.

We face a number of difficult issues.

That makes it even more important for me to address them directly with the Turkish leadership.

We are concerned about the consequences of Turkey's acquisition of the

S-400 system. The system can pose a risk to Allied aircraft and can lead to US sanctions.

This is a national decision for Turkey to make, but the S-400 cannot be integrated into NATO's air and missile defence system.

And I urge Turkey to work with other Allies to find alternative solutions. And we discussed this during our meeting today.

We also addressed the complicated situation in Libya and Syria. And the continued violence in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

We are deeply concerned by the escalation of hostilities.

All sides should immediately cease fighting. And find a way forward towards a peaceful resolution.

And I expect Turkey to use its considerable influence to calm tensions.

We have had important discussions on some of the most pressing challenges of the day.

And I look forward to discussing them with President Erdogan later on today as well.

NATO offers the platform for such exchanges among Allies and friends.

So dear Minister, dear Mevlüt,

thank you once again for a constructive and timely meeting, and for Turkey's commitment to our Alliance.

And thank you for hosting me here once again. Thank you.

QUESTION: So my question is both for distinguished Minister and distinguished Secretary General. First of all, distinguished Minister: Armenia, you mentioned that Armenia was also addressed during your bilateral talks. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia has started bringing the attacks to civilian places apart from Nagorno-Karabakh. How do you consider this aggressive stance of Armenia? And according to the United Nations resolutions, Armenia is actually attacker? And what do you think is the reason that there is not sufficient response or reaction given to Armenia? And to the Secretary General: in 2018, NATO Security Summit, energy security was mentioned to play an important role. So Armenia, regarding Turkey and Italy, has started organising attacks to the pipelines that carry energy. So if there's a direct attack on these energy pipelines, what would be the reaction of NATO against such an attack?

MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU [Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey]: Thank you very much for your question. Armenia's attacks on civilians is not something new. When you look at history of Armenia, in Khojaly, for example, more than 630, including women and children, more than 630 people have been brutally massacred. You can see this when you look at the history. And also in July, Armenia once again attacked civilians. And right now, Armenia, first in the conflict line, right in the regions, where Azerbaijan is located, attacked both military and

civilians, including children. Many civilians have become martyrs. On the other hand, in the recent years, in places that are near Baku and Ganja started launching missiles directly, actually targeting civilians. And this is actually a war crime.

And Azerbaijan, on its own territory, is fighting. And they are trying to retake its own territory, its own land from terrorists and occupants. And both from a perspective of law and morals, everyone should provide support to Azerbaijan, before everything.

But as you have mentioned all international organisations and countries either try to be very balanced or they are making statements in support of Armenia. For example, in the Minsk Group, France very openly is supporting Armenia. Well, the Minsk Group was established to resolve this issue, and it should be objective and it should take constructive steps, or bring suggestions to resolve the issue. However, for approximately 30 years, unfortunately, regarding the occupied territory of Karabakh and Azerbaijan, no constructive suggestions have been proposed, starting from Minsk Group.

When it comes to the territorial integrity of Ukraine or Georgia, so, in a very strong manner, both as tricky and, as our Western friends, we support these countries so that the territorial integrity of these countries are strongly supported. So why, when it comes to the issue between Azerbaijan and Armenia, why aren't we telling Armenia to withdraw from the land of Azerbaijan? Both countries are partners of NATO. So, of course, NATO should, in a balanced way, ask for a ceasefire and for a peaceful resolution of the issue, it's very normal that NATO provides that message. But international law, the resolutions of the United Nations and within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, this issue needs to be resolved, meaning Armenia should withdraw immediately. And that call should be made by everyone, including NATO. Otherwise, this issue cannot be resolved. For the last 30 years, Azerbaijan territory has been occupied. And there are one million people who have been displaced. And as Armenia is enjoying this and receiving strong support. Are there any other alternative solutions? No. And on one hand, I don't know where they have the courage to do so, but they are attacking Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan is retaliating and they are fighting on their own land. So everyone should be on the side of who is right, not who is strong, both morally and legally as well. And our attitude is very clear on this and we are expressing it as such. And as I mentioned before, Azerbaijan is not requesting any support from Turkey right now, but if they have it, we will not hesitate to provide it. And we have been stating this repeatedly, starting with our President.

JENS STOLTENBERG [NATO Secretary General]: We are deeply concerned about the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. We are, of course, watching the situation very carefully because we are concerned when we see the escalation in hostilities, more fighting, more violence. We have all seen the reports about the increased number of casualties, also, civilians, civilian casualties and, of course, any fighting like this also poses a risk to all kinds of critical infrastructure. So when you ask me about critical infrastructure, energy infrastructure, that's one of the many concerns which are related to violent conflict, as we see now evolving in and around Ukraine. So for all these reasons, it is extremely important that we convey a very clear message to all parties involved that they should cease fighting immediately, that we

should support all efforts to find a peaceful negotiated solution, because there is no military solution to the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. And this has been a very clear message from me ever since the fighting started, because it is dangerous for all those people involved, but it is, of course, also something which is of great concern for all the region and for all NATO Allies.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. This concludes the press meeting. There are no further questions.