

At NATO's Summit in Warsaw, it was announced that Germany will be the framework nation for Lithuania, as the Alliance is strengthening deterrence along its eastern periphery. Could you be more precise and mention how many troops Germany plans to station in Lithuania? What equipment they will bring?

The decision taken at the Summit in Warsaw, namely, to enhance the Alliance's presence in the geographically more exposed allied countries Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, has to be seen in a wider context. At the Wales Summit in 2014, NATO refocused on its core task of collective defence, in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia's actions in Ukraine. In Warsaw, NATO decided to continue its process of adaptation and strengthened defence – complemented by its offer of periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue.

In other words, NATO's answer is a dual-track approach: enhancing deterrence and defence, on the one hand, and maintaining dialogue with Russia, on the other. NATO will increase its forward presence on the territory of its eastern allies, while at the same time respecting the NATO-Russia Founding Act. NATO continues to aspire to meaningful dialogue with Russia, in particular in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council – which, by the way, held its second meeting this year, right after the Summit in Warsaw.

Regarding Germany's contribution to the enhanced forward presence: in general, this forward presence will be made up of battalion-sized units; one in each of the four host nations, reinforced with specific capabilities required for its area of deployment. As these battalions will be multinational, other Allies will be contributing as well. Their multinational composition is very important, as it makes clear that an attack against one Ally would be met by forces from across the Alliance. However, the bulk of the troops will come from the four framework nations, that is, the US in Poland, the UK in Estonia, Canada in Latvia, and Germany in Lithuania.

We are now working on defining the actual size and composition of the battalions. They are not meant to be identical and will be tailored in line with geographic and host nation considerations. That is a process our military planners began right after the Summit, in consultation with Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and the authorities of the host nations, in our case Lithuania. Details are yet to be worked out, but the concrete set-up of the battalion in Lithuania will be as it was announced by Chancellor Merkel at the Summit: Germany will serve as the framework nation, with additional contributions from Norway, the Franco-German Brigade, and the Benelux countries.

Lately, Germany has sent very different messages. On the one hand, it is deploying troops to the eastern flank, to strengthen deterrence. In Lithuania, this decision was very well received. On the other hand, Foreign Minister Steinmeier said last month that "What we shouldn't do now is inflame the situation further with loud sabre-rattling and warmongering. Anyone who believes a symbolic tank parade on the Alliance's Eastern frontier will create security is mistaken." (Politico, 2016-07-08).

*Interview with Ambassador Hans-Dieter Lucas, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany on the North Atlantic Council, published on 5 August 2016 in Lithuanian on www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/vokietijos-ambasadorius-nato-greitai-dislokuoti-pajegas-pries-rusija-nebepakanka.d?id=71972162.

I'd like to ask how the Lithuanian audience should understand these mixed messages. Are we inflaming the situation by strengthening the Alliance's military presence in the east, with four battalions in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, on a rotational basis? Is this decision creating security, or is it more of a symbolic move?

The quotation you are referring to must be seen in the context of a larger statement. The Foreign Office provides an official English translation of the statement on its web page and it's worthwhile reading. Minister Steinmeier argues for a dual-track approach in the east: Along with our steadfast commitment to contribute to ensuring a credible defence posture, we must always also be ready to engage in dialogue and cooperation. To quote Foreign Minister Steinmeier: "As much security as necessary, and as much dialogue and cooperation as possible."

Looking at the Warsaw decision to enhance NATO's forward presence in Poland and the Baltic states, this is exactly what was achieved. NATO has managed to strike the right balance between credible deterrence and defence, on the one hand, and meaningful dialogue and transparency, on the other hand.

At the same time, NATO's defence and deterrence is not merely "symbolic" and does not rest on four battalions alone. They are part of the overall strengthening of our defence and deterrence in response to the changed security environment.

Why has Germany decided to become a framework nation? What intention lies behind this decision?

For Germany, supporting Lithuania is a question of solidarity with our eastern Allies. We want to contribute our fair share to NATO's security and thus foster unity and solidarity – in the spirit of 28 for 28. With regard to our commitment for an enhanced forward presence in Lithuania, this is an excellent opportunity to broaden the already existing and very fruitful cooperation between our nations.

Within the Alliance it also became evident that it would not be enough to be able to quickly deploy troops such as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) – one of the measures we agreed in Wales. We found that in addition to the VJTF, given the increased assertiveness of Russia along NATO's eastern periphery, a forward presence is necessary to support our defence posture.

What is the main reason, from Germany's perspective, for why NATO has switched its defence doctrine from assurance to deterrence?

I would rather argue that the Alliance hasn't switched its doctrine. Both elements, assurance and deterrence, are complementary and follow the same logic: NATO's security is indivisible.

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NATO is ready to assist its most exposed Allies through assurance measures. That's what happened at Wales – NATO adopted the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and boosted its assurance measures. Now at Warsaw, the RAP was declared fully implemented – an impressive accomplishment which should not be underestimated. The Alliance has proven that it can deliver! At Warsaw, this was now complemented by measures which strengthen the Alliance's defence. The cornerstone of the Warsaw decisions in this regard is the enhanced forward presence. It is an answer to NATO's security challenges, and it provides for credible deterrence and defence. At the same time, all planned measures are in line with NATO's defensive nature.

Terrorism, too, is a very large threat to the societies of NATO countries. Much attention was paid to terrorism in NATO's communiqué. Do you think that more must be done in that area? What is the role of NATO?

NATO Allies stand united in the fight against terrorism. Terrorism remains high on NATO's security agenda, and Allies are working together, for example by sharing analysis, information and intelligence. Moreover, all NATO Allies are contributing to the efforts of the Global Coalition to counter ISIL.

We are also helping partner countries that are on the front line of the fight against terrorism. We are training Iraqi officers in Jordan. At the Summit, NATO took decisions to begin training and capacity building inside Iraq. NATO AWACS aircraft will stand ready to provide information to the Global Coalition to counter ISIL. And the Alliance is also enhancing its defence capacity building support for Jordan and Tunisia. In Afghanistan, we continue to support Afghan security forces, helping to deny terrorists a safe haven.

However, we also have to recognize one thing: Terrorism cannot be defeated by military means alone. There is a whole range of civilian instruments needed to combat fundamentalism and extremism in order to find political solutions. Therefore, we underlined in Warsaw the importance of ensuring that our activities complement one another, by working more closely with other international organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations.

NATO has started emphasizing nuclear deterrence, and the UK has voted for Trident renewal. I'd like to know if Germany fully supports NATO's nuclear capability. Do we really need that kind of deterrence?

As long as nuclear weapons exist, there will always be a need for nuclear deterrence. And that is why NATO remains a nuclear alliance. The strategic nuclear capabilities of NATO, and in particular those of the United States, are the ultimate guarantee of the security of its members.

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In the Communiqué, the Heads of State and Government reiterated that credible deterrence and defence is essential as a means to prevent conflict and war. Therefore, deterrence and defence, based on an appropriate mix of capabilities, not only conventional, but also nuclear and missile defence capabilities, remains a core element of NATO's overall strategy.

Germany continues to be an integral part of NATO's nuclear policy and planning, through so-called nuclear sharing. At the same time, Germany is committed to the goal of laying the foundations for a world without nuclear weapons. We know that given the current circumstances there will be no short-term developments in this domain, but NATO has adopted this goal as part of its 2010 Strategic Concept.

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