



THEME OF THE MONTH
APRIL 2022

NATO: WHAT IS IT?



WHAT IS NATO?

NATO's purpose is to provide support, security and a united front when one of its member countries are threatened by another. When the 12 founding nations sat down to sign the treaty in 1949, they agreed to “safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of the peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.”

NATO describe themselves as both a political and military alliance who prioritises both in their work:

- **Political:** “NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.”
- **Military:** “NATO is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defence clause of NATO's founding treaty – Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organisations.”



WHICH COUNTRIES ARE IN NATO, AS OF 2022?

- Belgium – joined 1949
- Canada – joined 1949
- Denmark – joined 1949
- France – joined 1949
- Iceland – joined 1949
- Italy – joined 1949
- Luxembourg – joined 1949
- Netherlands – joined 1949
- Norway – joined 1949
- Portugal – joined 1949
- United Kingdom – joined 1949
- United States of America – joined 1949
- Greece – joined 1952
- Turkey – joined 1952
- Germany – joined 1955
- Spain – joined 1982
- Czech Republic – joined 1999
- Hungary – joined 1999
- Poland – joined 1999
- Bulgaria – joined 2004
- Estonia – joined 2004
- Latvia – joined 2004
- Lithuania – joined 2004
- Romania – joined 2004
- Slovakia – joined 2004
- Slovenia – joined 2004
- Albania – joined 2009
- Croatia – joined 2009
- Montenegro – joined 2017
- North Macedonia – joined 2020

TOP FACTS ABOUT NATO

- NATO is a crisis management organisation that has the capacity to undertake a wide range of military operations and missions.
- It is engaged in operations and missions around the world, managing often complex ground, air and naval operations in all types of environment; with the outbreak of COVID-19, NATO is ensuring that deployed personnel are protected from the ongoing pandemic.
- NATO leads operations in Kosovo and the Mediterranean.
- In 2018, NATO initiated a training mission in Iraq, which aims at developing the capacity of Iraq's security forces, its defence and security institutions, and its national defence academies.
- NATO is also supporting the African Union and conducting air policing missions on the request of its Allies. Furthermore, NATO is assisting with the response to the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe and has Patriot missiles and AWACS aircraft deployed in Turkey.
- It also carries out disaster relief operations and missions to protect populations against natural, technological or humanitarian disasters.
- While neither an operation nor a mission as such, NATO is supporting civilian efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in member and partner countries, and providing support for local authorities where NATO troops are deployed.
- The tempo and diversity of operations and missions in which NATO is involved have increased since the early 1990s.



WHAT DOES NATO **STAND FOR?**

International cross-country alliance NATO stands for **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation**. NATO was formally established in April 1949, four years after World War 2 – when the West were worried about a potential attack by the Soviet Union. As a result, 12 countries including the UK and US came together to sign a treaty in Washington DC.

These 12 countries have come to be known as the founding nations of NATO, though the organisation has expanded significantly since then. Original members include: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Portugal. Plus the UK and the US.

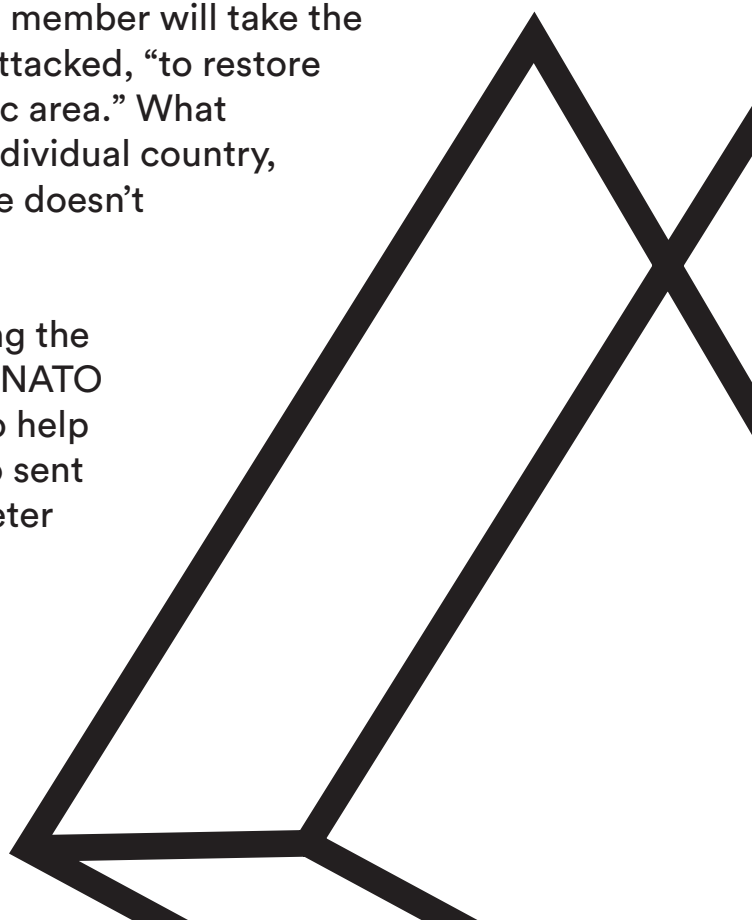
WHAT ARE THE MEMBERS' **RESPONSIBILITIES?**

NATO's Article 5 spells out its key principle of collective defense: If any member of the alliance is attacked, it shall be considered an attack on all members.

And if such an armed attack does occur, each member will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the ally attacked, “to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.” What assistance is provided is determined by the individual country, in concert with the other allies. The assistance doesn't necessarily have to be military.

Article 5 has been invoked just once: Following the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on Sept. 11, 2001. NATO launched its first ever anti-terror operation, to help patrol the skies over the U.S. The alliance also sent patrols to the Mediterranean to detect and deter terrorist activity.

Even without invoking Article 5, NATO has taken collective defense measures several times, including in Syria and now with the Russian attack on Ukraine.



WHAT IS NATO DOING FOR UKRAINE?



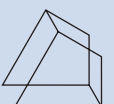
NATO has been amassing battalion-size “battlegroups” in countries along the alliance’s eastern flank in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. These forces are prepared for combat and are led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the U.S., respectively. The alliance has sent planes and ships to NATO territory in eastern and southeastern Europe, and there’s a multinational brigade in Romania.

Last week NATO announced it would create four new battlegroups in Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The alliance has also been providing huge amounts of weapons and equipment to Ukraine.

So far, the alliance has not met one repeated request by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy: to impose a no-fly zone. That’s because NATO fears that doing so would lead to direct combat with Russia, widening the conflict into a regional war and potentially even a third World War.

The U.S. has provided Ukraine with anti-aircraft weapons, though, which be used to shoot down aircraft and cruise missiles.



HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE WITHIN NATO?

Major decisions are approved at heads of government and state summits, held over one or two years. In between these summits, the foreign and defence ministers of Allies meet regularly. All decisions are made by consensus.

Each member is represented at NATO's political headquarters in Brussels by a delegation headed by an Ambassador.

HOW IS NATO FUNDED?

NATO is funded by Allies both directly and indirectly. Direct contributions are made to NATO budgets and programmes on an agreed cost-share formula, based on Gross National Income. This is the principle of "common funding" and finances NATO's principal budgets.

Indirect funding is where allies commit capabilities or troops to a military operation. On these occasions the member state bears the cost themselves.

DOES NATO HAVE ITS OWN ARMED FORCES?

No. Each member contributes forces and equipment to specific operations or exercises.

The UK, for example regularly contributes military assets to NATO operations and exercises. Royal Navy ships are frequently attached to the two standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups and to the two standing NATO maritime groups. RAF combat aircraft regularly patrol airspace above the Baltic nations with NATO's Baltic air policing mission. British army units are in the Baltics supporting NATO's enhanced forward presence mission.

NATO does own and operate some capabilities of its own, for example AWACS early warning radar aircraft.

WHO IS THE LEADER OF NATO?

NATO is officially headed up by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg. The 62-year-old became Secretary General in October 2014 and he will remain leader of NATO until September 2022.

Discussions are already underway to find Stoltenberg's replacement. Generally representatives from the member states offer up candidates and decide amongst themselves. Politico have reported that a female or Eastern European leader is hoped for next. Though we'll have to wait until the NATO leaders' summit in Madrid in late spring or early summer to learn who it is.

In addition to the Secretary General is the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. This is currently Admiral Rob Bauer of the Royal Netherlands Navy.

WHAT IS THE NATO LOGO?

The official NATO logo was finalised in October 1953. It features a white and blue compass on a dark blue background – with the blue representing the Atlantic Ocean. According to a NATO official “the emblem is a star gyronny, which represents the four points of the compass.”



EXAMPLES OF CURRENT NATO OPERATIONS

UKRAINE

Since 2015, British military personnel have helped support Ukraine against Russian aggression, training thousands of students, some of whom are volunteers, in key medical and infantry skills.

A rotated British force on Operation Orbital shares expertise on counter-sniping, mortar planning, anti-armour, counter-Improvised Explosive Devices and logistics.

The show of support followed Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014.

NATO has announced it is sending additional ships and fighter jets to eastern Europe as more recent tensions with Russia on the border of Ukraine continue to mount.

BALTICS AND POLAND

NATO commits to 24/7 air policing missions to secure the skies above Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

These Baltic states do not have the capability to police their own skies, so allies step in to ensure each member is offered the same level of protection.

Alliance fighter jets have repeatedly intercepted Russian aircraft violating airspace boundaries.

Combat-ready NATO troops are also stationed in the Baltic states and Poland under NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) to deter Russian forces from potential invasion.





MORE INFORMATION

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