



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN

# MISSION REPORT

DIALOGUE TRANSPARENCY PARTNERSHIP

## DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE (DSC)

Colorado Springs, CO; Washington D.C.; and Norfolk, VA,  
United States

6–10 March 2023

215 DSC 23 E | Original: English | 22 March 2023

## Introduction

While the United States upholds global security responsibilities, the immediate challenges to Euro-Atlantic security have its clear focus today. Front and centre of the US agenda for the Euro-Atlantic is sustaining Ukraine's legitimate self-defence efforts against Russia's full-scale invasion via full-throttled support at every level of national power – diplomatic, intelligence, military, humanitarian and economic. The United States has made it clear its overarching goals are not only assisting Ukraine recover its territory and, eventually, rebuild, but to also deny Russia's goals to create a sphere of influence and thwart the standing of the rules based international order by force.

Key to achieving these goals has been the combined efforts of NATO Allies working in lockstep with the United States since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February last year. Just after the one-year marker of the invasion, members of the Defence and Security Committee (DSC) at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly travelled to the United States from 6-10 March to further strengthen the essential transatlantic link via a series of meetings with their counterparts in the US Congress, the Departments of State and Defence, as well as at NATO's Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk, Virginia. The visit also included meetings at US Space Command and Maxar Technologies in Colorado. The DSC delegation was led by Chairman [Alec Shelbrooke](#) (UK) and consisted of 43 parliamentarians representing 15 NATO Allies plus Sweden.

## Allied Unity in Support of Ukraine's Legitimate Self-Defence

The challenges the Russia-Ukraine war poses to Euro-Atlantic and global security, and what Allies must do together to mitigate its effects, permeated the visit. US officials were consistent in their message: Allies must continue to work together to meet Ukraine's immediate self-defence needs as well as to ensure the Alliance's own deterrence and defence posture along its eastern flank remains strong. US Officials made it clear the United States was buoyed by the unprecedented unity among Allies since the start of the war, which has led to unprecedented collective action to thwart Russia's aggression and to uphold the rules based international order.

US direct assistance to Ukraine has far surpassed any other nation or institution's efforts. US military assistance to Ukrainian forces has consistently aligned with battlefield needs to allow for Ukraine to defend and repel Russia's invasion. Since January 2022, the United States has sent more than USD 43 billion in military aid to Ukrainian forces – almost ten times more than the second largest donor, the United Kingdom. US defence assistance, at its core, focuses on what officials call the '4 As' – armour, artillery, air defence, and ammunition – and is combined with training to allow Ukrainian forces to achieve effective firepower and manoeuvre.

Allies must continue to surge the military assistance necessary to enable a strong counteroffensive that will likely come later this spring. In parallel, officials and experts stressed, it is imperative Allies and partners maintain the strong political will to continue the sanctions regime hobbling Russia's ability to continue its war effort.

The US-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group (aka the Ramstein Group) has continued strong efforts to gather more than 50 Allies and partners to coordinate all forms of military assistance to Ukraine. New aid packages are forthcoming, with the goal of providing Ukraine's forces the combat-ready

equipment they need. Delegation members were urged to take the message home to their parliaments to do more to fund the Alliance's Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for Ukraine, as many essential programmes remain outstanding.

## **A Reinforced and Ready Eastern Flank Requires Increased Defence Spending**

Allied efforts to reinforce the eastern flank have been significant since 2014. The United States has maintained approximately 100,000 troops in the European theatre since the invasion, which includes 5 brigade combat teams (BCT).

NATO's new defence posture includes more forward deployed combat forces from across the Alliance, new and augmented stocks of pre-positioned equipment, and enhanced command and control. All supported by the new NATO Force Model, which requires Allies to have on hand a significantly larger number of high readiness forces capable of reinforcing Allied troops in the event of a contingency – the NATO Response Force (NRF), for example, is expected to surge from 40,000 troops on high readiness to 300,000. A key focus for the United States right now is to guarantee sufficient pre-positioned equipment to support the forward deployed rotating forces – something that has become increasingly challenging given the extraordinary outflows of military equipment to support the Ukrainian forces.

The United States is counting on its Allies to channel this moment of strong unity to implement the new baseline for deterrence and defence agreed upon at the 2022 Madrid Summit: Allies must work to reach new capability requirements, replenish ammunition and equipment stocks depleted to support Ukraine, and make the resources available to meet the requirements of NATO's new defence plans.

All of this will require significant new investments and building on the Wales Investment Pledge. The US certainly views the 2% of GDP as the floor and not the ceiling going forward.

## **Learning the Lessons of Russia's War and Preparing for Tomorrow's Fight**

Preparing NATO for the future operating environment is the central task of NATO's ACT. There, parliamentarians discussed, among others, initial lessons learned from Russia's war, the need to transition to integrated multi-domain defence development – seamlessly connecting all domains of warfare, and the importance of achieving cognitive superiority over potential adversaries.

The fast-paced advances of technology-driven changes in warfare was also a central visit focus. The increasing availability of autonomous systems, integrated communications systems, aided by the proliferation of space assets has upended battlefield dynamics. Ukraine's forces, though often at a numerical disadvantage, have been able to incorporate technological innovation with distributed command and control to great effect, breaking down battlefield asymmetry and eliminating Russian numerical advantages across the land, air, and sea domains. The ability to process information quickly to locate enemy positions and strike them with precision at distance has also proved decisive. Experts' views on Allies' ability to maintain their technological edge for future defence and deterrence focused on what they termed essential 'sprint' technologies requiring immediate government

investment today, as well as the 'follow' technologies tomorrow, which will require only adaptations of current innovations being developed on the market. Key among the 'sprint' technologies are the secure, redundant communication systems essential for joint-domain integration – the ability to achieve this will depend on secure, redundant, advanced space assets.

## **The Increasingly Vital Nature of Space**

The delegation's visit to US Space Command in Colorado Springs underscored the increasingly vital nature of the space domain to Allies. The degree to which Allies' layered space assets fuel every facet of life from the economy to defence cannot be underestimated.

Unfortunately, space is becoming an increasingly congested, competitive and contested domain as adversaries are seeking to militarise space. In fact, as both Russia and China seek to demonstrate their abilities to hold Allies' space assets at risk, there has never been a higher threat level in space than there is today, briefers warned. The US Department of Defense has made US Space Command its 11th Combatant Command. Its focus is to enable joint all-domain operations for the US military. The command also works to promote cooperation with Allies and partners.

## **Strategic Challenges Over-the-Horizon**

The growing complexity of the international security environment facing Allies impacts all domains of warfare and challenges the democratic societies underpinning NATO member states' prosperity. Analysts and officials made it clear that Russia's challenge to Allies' view of peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic is immediate and pressing, but also unlikely to go away if Russian forces lose in Ukraine. Russia has made its enmity to the rules based international order clear, and it has ample means to remain a significant threat to Euro-Atlantic security. This is evident by its significant grey zone disruptive activities from election interference to brinkmanship with Allied forces, as well as its reckless nuclear rhetoric and, most recently, by Moscow's decision to suspend its participation in New START, the only remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia. Moscow's undermining of strategic stability via its suspension of New START follows a pattern of breaking or selectively implementing arms control treaties. Officials made it clear Russia will gain no strategic advantage from its suspension of New START, stressing that any dubious issues Russia may claim to have with the treaty can be fixed, but only if Russia chooses to return to predictability and transparency.

Though its forces are being drained in a gruelling war of attrition in Ukraine, Moscow is angling for ways to increase its means for staying in the fight and even prevailing in Ukraine. In this regard, Russia's growing strategic partnership with China is something to continue to watch closely. It is clear Russia is now courting China to replenish key weapons systems and ammunition as its military continues to be ground down in Ukraine. While such a development has yet to occur, it would indeed be a game changer on the ground in Ukraine, and a strategic mistake for which China would pay a high price diplomatically and economically.

## Pressing Defence Industrial Base Adaptation Needed Today

Officials and experts both reminded the delegation that the challenge to Allies' defence industrial base is not just over-the-horizon technology development, but also creating the scale to develop the needs for today to replenish Ukraine's armed forces as well as their own strategic stockpiles. As briefers noted, Ukraine's current artillery fire rates surpass 150,000 shells a month, which is the equivalent of what the United States can produce in one year; the rate of Javelin anti-tank missile fires at the beginning of the war burned through a year's production rate in approximately two weeks. While ramping up 155 mm shell production to supply Ukraine's defence efforts requires expanding production at existing factories in the US and Europe, more complex arms, like the Javelin will take more time and require the supply chains necessary for the more tech-focused rocket motors and the 250-odd microprocessors needed for each missile.

[Photos](#) courtesy of the USSF Space Operations Command  
© NATO Allied Command Transformation

---