



NATO Today (9/26/18)

00:00:23 Andrew Senchak: Good morning, and welcome. My name is Andrew Senchak, and I am a 9/11 Memorial & Museum board member and co-chair of the board's education committee. It's my great pleasure to welcome all of you to this very special program. I'd like to acknowledge in particular our museum members in attendance, as well as the students from the High School of Economics and Finance. Where are they sitting? Very good-- okay. Study hard on economics and finance. I really, I encourage you.

00:01:23 And, also, the Urban Assembly School Emergency Management. And where are you? Over there-- okay. We need you, too.

(laughter)

Andrew Senchak: And I'd like to also welcome my fellow board member, Monica. I can... where are you, Monica? Hi. And members of the FBI's New York off... New York office's executive management team. I assume we don't want you to identify yourselves.

(laughter)

00:01:37 Andrew Senchak: And the Norwegian Consulate General, Harriet E. Berg, who denies... She says she's neither a Mets nor a Yankees fan. And our special thanks to Harriet and the New York Norwegian Consulate General for their support of this event. We are honored to hear today from Jens

Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

00:02:05 Mr. Stoltenberg was born in Oslo, Norway, and had a distinguished career in politics, culminating in his tenure as Norway's prime minister from 2005 to 2013. On July 22, 2011, Norway faced the worst terrorist attack in its modern history, when a single terrorist killed 77 people in two sequenced attacks, first by setting off a bomb in the government center in Oslo, killing eight people, and soon after, attacking a youth camp associated with Norway's Labor Party-- Mr. Stoltenberg's party, his political home-- on a small island near Oslo, killing 69 people, most of them teenagers. (clears throat)

00:03:02 Mr. Stoltenberg took on the task of rallying and reassuring his country. His declaration on the evening of July 22 has frequently been cited as a defining moment in Norwegian history. This is his quote: "The answer to the attacks must be more democracy and more openness. Otherwise, those who were behind them will have achieved their goals."

00:03:31 This, I believe, is probably the proper response that we can all make to all terrorist attacks. And I thank him for saying that. Thank you.

On September 12, 2001, NATO invoked its mutual defense clause for the first and only time in its history. The invocation of Article 5, which states that an armed attack against one member shall be considered an attack against them all, ultimately sent thousands of allied troops to fight alongside Americans in Afghanistan.

00:04:09 More than 1,000 NATO military members died in honoring this commitment. These experiences have given Mr. Stoltenberg a deep appreciation of the importance of remembering and of the importance of the interaction of memory and values.

- 00:04:29 Today is his third visit to the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. I am also very proud to note that the museum has provided ongoing advice to the development of Norway's memorial response to the July 22 attacks. In that spirit, we are going to make gift of a Survivor Tree seedling to NATO for planting at its Brussels headquarters near the World Trade Center steel that has already been installed there.
- 00:05:01 We will hear today from Mr. Stoltenberg about NATO's enduring commitment to the fight against terrorism. His speech will be followed by a moderated conversation led by the memorial's museum executive vice president and deputy director of programs, Cliff Chanin. Please join me in welcoming the Secretary of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg.
- (applause)
- 00:05:36 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: So, thank you so much, Andrew, and many thanks to all of you for welcoming me... welcoming me here today. As you mentioned, this is my third visit. I remember last time, I think that's three years ago, then we start to discuss... then we started to discuss whether I should come back and to give a speech. And we have struggled since then to find a time, but now we actually finally succeeded.
- 00:06:03 So, therefore, I am very glad that I am able to be here once again, and this time to actually say some words, and also to answer some questions. At the entrance to NATO's new headquarters in Brussels, a twisted piece of metal stands vigil. It is a restored six-foot section of a steel girder that was recovered from this spot in the ruins of the Twin Towers. This is a fragment of American history which is also an important part of NATO's history.
- 00:06:41 And I want to thank the National September 11 Memorial for making it available to NATO. It serves as a powerful symbol of the enduring partnership and friendship between the United States and its NATO allies across Europe and Canada. It is also a daily reminder of the deadly

dangers posed by terrorism, the importance of standing together to protect our people and our values.

00:07:16            Coming here to Ground Zero is a time for solemn reflection, a time to pay tribute to the innocent victims of 9/11, a time to remember the suffering, the sorrow, and the staggering loss on that terrible day. But let us also recall the sense of community and a common purpose that emerged from the wreckage. The goal of terrorism is always to spread fear and to sow discord and division and disunity. Our response to terrorism in all its forms, wherever it appears, is to unite and stand up for our open and free societies.

00:08:09            We have many different tools in the fight against terrorism, and we need to use them all, because terrorism comes in many different forms and wears many different guises. It rears its head in conflicts far away, but also in our own cities. To fight radicalization at home, we need social workers, teachers, and religious leaders, poets and artists, people from all walks of life. We need our police and our intelligence services.

00:08:51            To bring an end to conflicts which fuel terrorism, we need political, diplomatic, and economic efforts, and we need military might. NATO's involvement in the fight against terrorism stems directly from the 9/11 attacks on the United States. For the first and only time in NATO's history, we invoked our Article 5, our defense... our collective defense clause of our founding treaty, which states that an attack against one is an attack against all allies.

00:09:36            In the days that followed the 9/11 attack, NATO planes helped to patrol American skies. Soon after, troops from NATO allies deployed to Afghanistan to prevent that country from ever again becoming a safe haven for international terrorists. Since then, hundreds of thousands of troops from America's NATO allies and our partners have stood shoulder to shoulder with American soldiers in Afghanistan. More than 1,000 have paid the ultimate price.

- 00:10:14           And today, NATO allies continue to stand with the United States in Afghanistan and elsewhere. All NATO allies take part in the global coalition to defeat ISIS. NATO provides surveillance aircraft and training. We have taught counterterrorism tactics in countries like Egypt, Mauritania, and Morocco, and our troops are helping to develop special forces in Jordan and Tunisia.
- 00:10:47           We recently decided to boost NATO's contribution to the fight against terrorism, with a new training mission in Iraq and more support for our partners in the Middle East and North Africa. We also agreed to sustain our military and financial support for Afghanistan. Training local forces is one of the best weapons we have in the fight against terrorism because prevention is better than intervention.
- 00:11:16           Instead of deploying large number of combat forces in combat missions and operations, it is more sustainable to help our neighbors to stabilize their own countries. If our neighbors are more stable, we are more secure. Visiting this solemn space reminds us of what is at stake. So I want to thank you for creating this poignant and powerful memorial and museum, along with educational programs about the 9/11 attacks and terrorism, helping to bolster our resilience and reminding us who we are.
- 00:12:06           Your guidance and inspiration have been helpful to other countries and communities that have suffered from terrorism. I was prime minister of Norway on the 22nd of July, 2011, a date that will live in infamy in the history of our small country. 77 innocent men and women, boys and girls were coldheartedly killed by a hate-filled white Norwegian with an extremist ideology and a willingness to use indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians.
- 00:12:49           In the years since then, Norway has benefited from the invaluable insights from the National September 11 Memorial, helping Norway to heal and to reaffirm our own memorials and a strong resolve to preserve freedom and to end hatred and intolerance. In Norway, at Utoya, the island that was attacked, we created a memory tree inspired by the Survivor Tree here at Ground Zero.

- 00:13:25 A month after the Twin Towers fell, workers uncovered the last living thing to emerge from the rubble. Only a few signs of life, a few determined leaves, remained. For nine years, the Survivor Tree was lovingly nursed back to health, and then returned here to the Memorial Plaza in 2010, a phoenix risen from the ashes. You have donated seedlings from the Survivor Tree to communities that have been scarred by tragedies here in the United States and abroad, a living symbol of hope, renewal, and rebirth.
- 00:14:15 And I am really honored that you are donating one of the Survivor Tree seedlings to be planted at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, a living companion of that twisted piece of metal from the rubble of the Twin Towers. It will commemorate the thousands of NATO soldiers who have given their lives in fighting terrorism.
- 00:14:42 So now I would like to present two gifts of my own to the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum. One is a photograph of our 9/11... an Article 5 memorial at the entrance to the NATO headquarters. The second is a copy of NATO's founding treaty.
- 00:15:03 The treaty enshrines the enduring partnership between North America and Europe and our binding commitment to democracy, freedom, and the rule of law, values that strengthen us and will help us prevail over hatred, violence, and intolerance. So I don't know who is going to receive the gift, but one of you has to come up. And then all of you, yeah.
- 00:15:32 So this is the picture. And this is the... this is actually from here. And we inaugurated this piece, this steel girder, at the NATO summit, NATO leaders' meeting, in May 2017, yeah? So that was a great event. And it stands... everyone who goes into the NATO headquarters, they have to pass this, this piece from the Twin Tower.
- 00:16:06 Uh... And it's the 9/11 Article 5 Memorial, because, as you said, this was the first and only time we invoked Article 5, and, so far, our biggest

military operation ever is a direct consequence of the terrorist attacks here at Ground Zero. So that's the first gift, yeah. Thank you.

(applause)

(speaking under applause, off mic)

00:16:39 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Come, let's... Oh, yeah, yeah.

Clifford Chanin: Come into the light, all right.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: A picture of the picture.

(laughter, camera clicking)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Okay... and then... and then I have one more. And that's this one. This is actually our founding treaty. The good thing is that... Actually, there are many international treaties which are very long and very complicated.

00:17:05 This is very brief and very easy to understand. So that shows the greatness of the people who created the Washington treaty back in 1949. And it actually briefly just says if one ally is attacked, we are all under attack. So, this is the NATO founding treaty.

Andrew Senchak: Thank you.

(applause)

00:17:31 Clifford Chanin: And, in return, whenever we get gifts, we give trees back. But, in return, the Secretary General did mention our intention to make the donation of the seedling, which will be planted at NATO headquarters, so we'll...

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Thank you so much.

(applause)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Okay? Thank you.

00:17:53 Clifford Chanin: I'll put this over here. If you would take a seat. Good. Okay. Well, thank you, again, on all of our behalfs, for coming here and making time in your schedule. You spoke to obvious moving effect about the attack in Norway, your role as prime minister. I wonder, the impact that you saw that happening... that having within Norwegian society, and the impact of that on you, particularly as you moved into the role of NATO Secretary General.

00:18:41 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: The impact on Norway was, I think, that in one way we lost our innocence. Because we thought that this was something that couldn't happen in Norway. Terrorism, terrorist attacks were something that could happen in other countries, but not in Norway. And then, suddenly, it happened in Norway, and it not only happened in Norway, but the scale and the scope of that terrorist attack is one of the biggest in Europe over many, many years.

00:19:06 So, of course, if you measure the number of casualties, it's much bigger what happened here, but if you measure against other terrorist attacks in Europe or against the size of the Norwegian population, five million, then this was really something really big, really awful, and, and also the character of the violence shocked us all. The strength was... and what I think impressed us all was the way the Norwegian people reacted.

00:19:38 Because instead of hatred and, in a way, revenge, it was about tolerance, democracy, openness, to guard those principles and those values that were under attack. And there were many expressions of that, but one of the strongest expressions was what we called the rose marches, or hundreds of thousands of people walking out in the streets, expressing their support for an open and free Norwegian society, and we, I think, have been able to maintain a high level of trust and openness in Norway. Then you asked me...

Clifford Chanin: About the Secretary General's role.

00:20:22 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Yeah, and to be honest, it has been extremely useful. Perhaps that's the wrong thing to say, but I think that for me, it is useful to have been so close to a terrorist attack, because when I came to NATO, of course, it was about a more sort of Russia, Ukraine, and the challenges in the East. But I came to NATO when we really had to step up in the fight against Daesh-- ISIS-- in Iraq, Syria, when we saw many serious terrorist attacks in our own streets in Paris, Brussels, in London, and elsewhere.

00:20:57 So terrorism came very high on my agenda. And I met and I talked to many political leaders in other NATO allies who suffered terrorist attacks. And for me to be able to share with them the experience, the importance of uniting against... our values. I remember, for instance, we marched in the streets of Paris, many political leaders from European countries and elsewhere, and that was not the same as the rose marches in Oslo, but it was something similar.

00:21:30 People going out in the streets saying that we don't want to be intimidated. We don't to be... we don't want to be scared. We want to protect the normal life of people living in Paris, going to cafes, living normal lives. So it has been an advantage for me to have my experience from Norway when I discuss these issues with political leaders in other NATO allied countries as Secretary General of NATO.

- 00:22:02 Clifford Chanin: Yes. You speak about the importance of values, and these are what underpin NATO. You talk about these efforts to remember as also a matter of remembering who we are. And yet, I wonder if you find, given the political turmoil in many countries, the tensions within all kinds of societies, do you think that we, whoever we are, do we still agree on what our values are, or is there something fundamentally being contested right now?
- 00:22:34 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Fundamentally, I think we agree and understand the value of open, free societies, depending a bit on who we are. So... and at least I think there is... And as soon as those values are under real threat, at least we understand how important they are. Either... and the real threat from terrorist organizations, from terrorist threats or from governments or adversaries.
- 00:23:05 So I think the danger is that sometimes when you take these values for granted, you forget... it's easy to forget how important it is to uphold them and to defend them. Then I think what we have to admit is that sometimes we have different views on how we best protect them and actually how... how we practice these values in the best possible way.
- 00:23:32 And this is, of course, a bit sensitive because this is also a discussion inside the alliance. But fundamentally, I think that there's a broad understanding of the value of open, free societies, and the main response from NATO allies when they are under terrorist attack is to unite around those values.
- 00:23:53 Clifford Chanin: You spoke about the challenges that the alliance faces, and I wanted to turn immediately to the question of Russia. And, obviously, Russia is an adversary, if that's the right word, to the United States, of course, to the NATO alliance. Describe, if you would, the strategy that you see the Russians putting into play here, whether it's in terms of military efforts or in terms of efforts to undermine the confidence of societies in the values you've just described.

- 00:24:27 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: What we see is a more assertive Russia, and Russia uses both the tools you mentioned. They use military efforts, military capabilities. We have seen that in Ukraine, illegally annexing Crimea. We have seen it, for instance, in Syria, where they, as a provide... as a... as a strong and, and very powerful support for the Assad regime, with military means.
- 00:24:51 But they also use what we call hybrid techniques or tactics, which is, you know, more covert tools or activities, meddling in political processes in different member states and partner nations of NATO, disinformation and propaganda. And the whole thing is that the whole... If one NATO ally is under attack, armed attack, then we trigger Article 5 and we defend each other. And we have done a lot over the recent years to improve our capability to do exactly that.
- 00:25:26 The challenge now is that we are challenged with what we call tools or activities below Article 5. So it's not so serious, not so visible, not so overt that we can react by invoking Article 5. For instance, disinformation. We saw the Skripal case. We saw recently, Greece expelled some Russian officials that were meddling in the political process in Greece related to the name agreement between Greece and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia-- very important issue in that part of Europe.
- 00:26:03 So NATO has to be able to respond both to an armed attack, which is something we have prepared for and planned for for 70 years, but we also need to be able to respond to something which is below a full armed attack. And that's about intelligence. That's about... cyber, improving our cyber defenses. That's about also meeting the disinformation and the propaganda. And that's partly about NATO providing facts and countering some of the disinformation which is out there, or helping member states to do so.
- 00:26:39 But I think one of the most important things we do to counter disinformation and propaganda is to stand up for a free and open press, or free and open media. Because at the end of the day, it has to be the media, journalists, that asks the difficult questions, that check their

sources, and are able to discover when another state tried to meddle in political processes in one or another NATO ally.

00:27:04 Clifford Chanin: This meddling in the political processes is said to be part of the Russian strategy, Putin's strategy, to essentially put a wedge into the alliance so that some members become weaker. And as we say, you're only as strong as your weakest link. Would you agree with that assessment? And do you think he has... or the Russians have made headway in that regard?

00:27:27 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Um... I think Russia tries to divide us. Russia is, don't like NATO. That's... it's... and that's fair enough. They, they disagree with us. They don't like the idea that we stand together. And, and that's a, that's a Russian position. And, of course, they would regard it as a great success if they were able to divide us. And, to be honest, we see some divisions within allies, or within, between allies. Not only, you know, initiated by Russia, but for different reasons.

00:28:06 We see differences between NATO allies. What I say, when I'm confronted with that, is that NATO is an alliance of 29 democracies on both sides of the Atlantic, and there has been and there will be differences between different, independent nations with different culture, different history, different political parties in government. So there will be differences.

00:28:31 The strength of NATO is that we, despite these differences, have, we have always been able to unite around our core task, and that is to protect and defend each other. So as long as we're able to continue to do that, we can live with differences. Actually, differences, open discussions, disagreements, it's not always a sign of weakness. It's very often a sign of strength, as long as we are able to unite around our core task. And I'm afraid this answer is a bit long, but let me add...

00:28:57 Clifford Chanin: No, please.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Because sometimes we forget that we have seen serious disagreements between NATO allies before. You know, I watch the TV series "The Crown," so I learn a lot from that. TV series are very...

(laughter)

00:29:15 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Don't tell anyone, but it's very useful to watch. And one of the, one of the episodes there is about, you know, the Suez crisis, which was a big crisis in the relationship between U.S. and France and United Kingdom. They went into military action against Egypt, and the United States was against, and it was really a bad... It really created a really bad relationship between the United States and two main European NATO allies.

00:29:43 And even after... it was a point of crisis in the U.K. Well, we... that was during the coldest period of the Cold War. And NATO continued to deliver deterrence and defense despite the Suez crisis. Ten years later, we, you know... NATO used to have its headquarters not in Brussels, but in Paris. And I've seen the beautiful building where the NATO headquarters used to be, with a view to the Eiffel Tower.

00:30:13 And we had both our civilian headquarters and our military headquarters in Brussels. Then in '67, the relationship between President Johnson and President de Gaulle turned not so very constructive, so, so we just had to leave. And we left. And I was not attending NATO meetings at that time, but I guess the meetings were not the best atmosphere you have seen. And then some years later, we disagreed on the Iraq war. Some allies were heavily involved in the Iraq war, 2003. Other allies were strongly against.

00:30:45 We have overcome... we have been able to overcome all these differences and disagreements, and still be the most successful, the strongest alliance in history, protecting each other. So we cannot guarantee that NATO will always be able to overcome disagreements, but at least we have proven that we are able to do it. And my ambition, my

task, my responsibility is to make sure that despite the differences we see, we should be able to do it also in the future.

- 00:31:15 Clifford Chanin: Thank you. Speaking of some differences, there's been talk about the contribution of various NATO members to the budgets of their own militaries and, therefore, to the alliance. I wonder if you could speak about the NATO response to the president's comments about this. And, also, in relation to that, whether you think the bottom line of budget contributions is the way to assess the value of the alliance.
- 00:31:46 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: First, NATO allies have agreed to invest more in defense not to please the United States, but because it is in our own security interests to strengthen our collective defense. Then, in addition, when European allies and Canada invest more, we also contribute to a fairer burden sharing within the alliance, which I think is fair because the burden sharing now is imbalanced.
- 00:32:17 The GDP of the gross national... the gross domestic product of the United States is approximately as big as the gross domestic product of European NATO allies. Despite that, the U.S. spends more than twice as much on defense. So, therefore, we have agreed that those who are spending less than two percent of G.D.P. on defense should increase and reach the two-percent guideline. The good news is that that's exactly what the European allies have started to do. They still have... they have a long way to go, but after years of cutting or declines in defense budgets, we now see an increase.
- 00:33:00 Last year, we had the biggest increase in defense spending since the end of the Cold War, more than five percent. And just over the two last years, we had more than 41 billion extra U.S. dollars from Canada and the United States invested in defense. Um... um, then... So, so, I agree, we need the fair burden sharing. And the good news is that we have started to deliver on that. Uh... and, uh... and... But still we have a long way to go.

00:33:32 In 2014, when we made this decision, it was actually only three allies that met the two-percent guideline. And this year, we expect eight allies to meet the two-percent guideline. And even those who are below have started to move towards the two-percent guideline, so it's going in the right direction.

00:33:48 Then you asked me whether defense spending is the only way to measure. No, of course not. NATO is a political and military alliance. We need to deliver military strength, collective defense, but we need also to deliver political efforts, diplomatic efforts. I'm strongly in favor of dialogue with Russia, for instance. We've got to try to defuse tensions to avoid a new arms race. So we have many other tasks than just deliver military strength.

And, and let me also add that I'm not all... I was minister of finance back in the 1990s in Norway, and I was able to cut defense budgets. I'm really good at that. I know exactly how to do it.

(laughter)

00:34:33 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: And it's just a contrast-- military spending with health care and then, "Oh..." So, so, I know... And I'm not ashamed of that. Because the thing is that it's possible to reduce defense spending when tensions are going down. And after the end of the Cold War, after the Berlin... the Berlin Wall came down and the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, then it was actually the right thing to do, to cut or reduce the defense spending.

00:35:02 So you can do that when tensions are going down, as long as you're able to increase defense spending when tensions are going up, as they are doing now. So, therefore... Yeah, therefore, I'm now a strong advocate for increased investments in defense.

Clifford Chanin: You mentioned Afghanistan in your remarks, and it's 17 years that combat has been underway there, with the United States and its NATO allies. In this country, certainly, there is a sense of, "Does this ever end? Are we going to be there forever?"

00:35:33                    Because we've been there... the longest military engagement we've had. What do you see as the endgame in Afghanistan? And this debate in the U.S. that I've mentioned, about whether we should continue this commitment, do you see that debate being duplicated in some of the NATO countries that have been there for so long, as well?

00:35:55                    NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: As... we have been there for 17 years. And I think it's fair and right to ask questions about whether it's right to continue, because we should not only continue just because we have been there. We need, we need a deliberate decision. We need some real assessments about whether to stay or not before we make our decisions.

00:36:20                    And we have done that, and we need, of course, also to continue to do that. But the conclusion has been that we should stay, uh, because... Mainly because we... There are... There are high costs related to staying in Afghanistan. We have more than 16,000 NATO troops there in the train, assist, and advise mission. It's a high financial cost and it's a political cost, and, of course, it is a human cost.

00:36:50                    We still have some casualties. But when you compare the cost of staying with the cost of leaving, our conclusion is that the cost of leaving is higher. Because if we leave Afghanistan, I think we have to be prepared for, that Taliban will be, will come back, and ISIS is in Afghanistan, and they will try to re-establish the caliphate they lost in Iraq and Syria. They will re-establish in Afghanistan. So that's the most likely outcome if we leave.

00:37:25                    So then if we leave, we have to be prepared to stay out of Afghanistan, even though Afghanistan once again becomes a safe haven for international terrorists, and they start to train, organize, plan, finance

terrorist attacks on our own countries from Afghanistan. And if... and if... and if we were able to promise ourself that despite that, we will not go back, then it's possible to leave. But I don't think we will... We will not be willing to watch that happen.

00:37:55 So then we will leave, stay out for some years, and be forced back again. And that's the worst possible alternative. And we have to remember that the reason why we are in Afghanistan is very much because of what happened here. We have to remember that not NATO, because NATO was not present as an alliance, but NATO allies left Iraq in 2011, then a few years later, we were all back, all of us, from the left to the right, everyone.

00:38:23 I was against Iraq war in 2003. All those politicians I know that was against Iraq war in 2003, they were in favor of going back now. So it's only if you really believe that we are willing to stay out and watch ISIS-- Khorasan, which is the Afghan branch of ISIS-- take over, and say, "No, no, just continue and not go back," then you can leave. So I'm back to my main point: there is no easy way out. There is no easy solution. There is no solution in Afghanistan without costs.

00:38:57 But the cost of leaving is, in my best judgment, higher than the cost of staying. Add to that that our presence in Afghanistan now is totally different than what it was... different from what it was at the beginning. Because for many years, we had a big combat operation in Afghanistan, where we had more than 100,000 troops. And when there was a Taliban attack, it was U.S. forces or Danish forces or Norwegian forces that went out and responded to the Taliban attack. Now it's the Afghans themselves. They go out. They are in the front line.

00:39:37 We help them, we train them, we fund them. But we have gone from more than 100,000 troops in the combat operation to 16,000 troops in the train, assist, and advise mission. U.S. do some counterterrorism on top of that, but still, it's a totally different presence, and, therefore, a very much more enduring and sustainable presence.

- 00:40:03           And that's the reason why I said in my speech that prevention is better than intervention. The best thing we can do to fight international terrorism is to train local forces, as we have done in Afghanistan, and, and help them. The last thing about Afghanistan-- it is really serious. I mean, the Taliban is there. ISIS is there. Many different terrorist groups are there. So I'm not saying that this is a straightforward, easy way, but I'm saying that the alternative is worse.
- 00:40:27           Clifford Chanin: Let me follow up on that, because, you know, implicit in your remarks that if we go, the Taliban will succeed, it casts some question about the effectiveness of the training operation. How long this will go on, and whether or not under any circumstances and under any length of time, it can be effective. So how do you assess the effectiveness of that mission and whether or not at some point, there will be a possibility of a further reduction of NATO troops, if not a complete withdrawal?
- 00:40:56           NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: I think that if there's any lesson we have learned from Afghanistan, it's that we should have started the training and the capacity building earlier. Um... But we have at least succeeded in building and trained Afghan forces and, and the police, which are now... They are able to hold the main cities, the ground, in most of the provinces in Afghanistan. Again, it's not easy.
- 00:41:28           But, for instance, the stated goal of Taliban this year was to take control over one of the provincial capitals. They have not succeeded in that. Taliban controls territory in Afghanistan. They pose a constant threat. But at least we have some... We have the Afghan army and security forces being in the front line, being responsible for security in their own country.
- 00:41:52           Well, um... The aim... The, the way to leave Afghanistan is to find... is to be able to reach a political solution. And, therefore, we strongly support the bold and new initiatives by President Ghani to really engage in a political peace process with Taliban. The U.S. is also engaging now in political process or peace efforts with Taliban. And, hopefully, that can lead to something.

00:42:28 I don't think that we will ever see Afghanistan, you know, as stable and as peaceful as, you know, our own countries. But at least that we can come on a situation where it's responsible to leave. We will not stay longer in Afghanistan than necessary, but we will stay as long as is needed to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for international terrorists.

And we are staying there now to also send a clear message to the Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield, so they have to sit down at the negotiating table, and then reach a political compromise with the government in Kabul.

00:43:04 Clifford Chanin: Let me ask, as Secretary General, you obviously get a very strong sense of the impact of the fighting in Afghanistan on the different partner militaries. Two questions, and these have been raised in relation to the United States military and its role in fighting both Afghanistan and Iraq. One, certainly, the capacities to fight this kind of war seem to have improved. And so there is a more effective way of doing this, it seems, over time.

00:43:31 On the other hand, it takes you away from, in the case of NATO, what the core business is, which is the defense of Europe and certainly the original idea of this Soviet Russian threat. So how would you assess the impact on the militaries that have been in Afghanistan for these 17 years in these two senses?

00:43:50 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Um... I think that what happened after 9/11 and when NATO started... Well, actually, it started to happen a bit before. Because it started when we went into Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Very different, but at least we started then to have military operations out of area. And for people who are, who are as old as I am, I remember that in the '80s, it was a big discussion whether NATO should go out of area, meaning go out of the... to have any military presence outside NATO allied territory.

- 00:44:26           And while we had this more theoretical debate, we suddenly saw, the Berlin Wall came down, and people started to ask, "Do we need NATO anymore?" Because the reason why we existed was the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact, and that just disappeared. And then people said that NATO either had to go out of area, meaning beyond NATO territory, or out of business. And we went not out of business, but out of area.
- 00:44:53           First, helping to end two wars in the Balkans-- Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia-- and then later on in Afghanistan and fighting piracy and elsewhere. What that did with our armed forces is that we transformed our armed forces for more static, collective defense-- heavy armor, heavy troops, high-end capabilities in Europe-- to more light, expeditionary forces in the mountains of Afghanistan. And that's a totally different concept, totally different equipment, totally different training.
- 00:45:30           So we transformed it from collective defense of Europe to expeditionary forces able to deploy quickly all over the world, very far away. And it also increased what we call interoperability, because we had, for the first time in our history, then, troops from different NATO allies and partner countries really working together in military operations. NATO had not fired one single shot before we went beyond NATO territory into the Balkans and later into Afghanistan.
- 00:46:00           So that's, that's, in a way, that developed our military capabilities. The challenge was that it weakened our ability to, to do additional collective defense in Europe. For, as I said, one way, good reasons. Because tensions went down. We didn't see Russia as a real challenge anymore, so we could divert our resources to something else. The challenge now is that we have to go back to do more collective defense, more the old, as a traditional deterrence defense in Europe with armor, with heavy equipment, with all that.
- 00:46:36           But at the same time, we need to continue to manage crises beyond our borders. So for 40 years, NATO did only one thing-- that was collective defense in Europe from '49 to '89. Then, for 25 years, we reduced our, as I said, focus on collective defense. We were expeditionary alliance doing something far away.

00:46:56 Now, we have to continue to be far away in operations, like Afghanistan, and to do collective defense in Europe at the same time. So I, for the first time in NATO's history, we need to do crisis management and collective defense at the same time. And that's the big transformation of NATO which has taken place over the last four, five years, and which we have so far successfully been able to implement.

00:47:23 Clifford Chanin: Thank you. We're going to take a couple of questions. And we have seeded a couple in the audience. We have, as you know, students from the High School of Economics and Finance and the Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management. And we've asked those schools each to prepare a question. So I'm going to call first on Jessica. Where are you, Jessica? Somewhere-- there you are. Please stand up. You'll take the microphone and ask a question, please, for the Secretary General.

00:47:54 Audience Member: What do you think your challenges are for the next ten to 15 years?

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: You know, I think it's very hard to predict, because all those people who are in the business of predicting, they are normally totally wrong.

(laughter)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: I mean, I'm... in one way, it's a big surprise how many people can have... that have so many exams and PhDs and... in so many different fields, and they are always wrong.

Clifford Chanin: That's very reassuring.

(laughter)

00:48:27 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: No, no, but... not always. But at least they are not very clever at predicting the future. And I was, I started... I worked for two years in the Central Bureau of Statistics in Norway, and then I worked together with some people that were predicting oil prices. It was a total catastrophe.

(laughter)

00:48:44 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: We were... and, we actually, what we started to do-- and now we have done that for some years, because we are very dependent on oil prices in Norway, and we are starting to do something, I think, which is very interesting-- we're looking backwards, and then we compare our predictions five, ten, 20 years ago with what actually happened, and it illustrates that there's a totally big gap.

00:49:05 The reality is that when prices are going up, we predict they will continue to go up. And when they're going down, we predict they will continue to go down. Approximately, something like that. But we pay a lot for all this analysis. But then you have social sciences, economists. We, you know, mathematics and we have models, and so on, but we are still wrong, on the oil prices. Not always wrong, but on the oil prices.

00:49:29 Uh... You know, I remember a debate in Norway with some experts on foreign and security issues, the spring '89. You know, I will not mention the names of those experts, because that would be an insult. They were sitting there, and they were asked, "Do you think the Berlin Wall can come down?" "No, no, no-- no way. Perestroika and glasnost, that's possible, that will change Russia as the Soviet Union. But the Berlin Wall, that will still... It will stand." Then, months later, it just went down. And then the same experts are experts in explaining why it went down.

(laughter)

00:50:12 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: And we pay them for that, too.

(laughter)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: So they're good at business, as well as... And then... and then... and then the Arab Spring, or 9/11. I mean, when we... When we in NATO had, you know, analyzed what kind of threats and challenges we were going to face, not many people were able to predict 9/11.

00:50:34 And if you asked experts, as I was not going around in NATO, but I think very much that if you asked experts back in 2001, "When will be"-- or before 9/11-- "What will be the first case when NATO invokes Article 5?" no one would have said, "A terrorist attack on the United States." The whole idea with Article 5 was to defend European allies against Soviet Union sending the battle tanks over something called the Fulda Gap in Germany.

00:51:04 So the reason why I say all this is that when you hear people start to predict what will happen in ten, 15 years, you should always be very suspicious.

(laughter)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: But, you know, thank you.

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin: Here we go.

00:51:23 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Yeah, yeah, but then... So, but what you can do is to be prepared for the unforeseen, to have a strategy to deal with surprises, to have a strategy to deal with uncertainty. And what we did in Norway was that we... We were less focused on our ability to predict oil prices, because we were always wrong about that, but we developed a strategy to how to deal with fluctuations in oil prices and fluctuation in oil revenues. So we invented the pension fund, which is a beautiful thing in Norway.

(laughter)

00:52:01 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: So then, I'm not saying it doesn't matter. But since we're not able to predict, so, ten, 15 years about the oil price, we created a mechanism to deal with uncertainty. And that's exactly the same we had to do when it comes to security. I cannot tell you exactly what will be the main challenge or the main threat or the main something in ten, 15 years.

00:52:26 But I can tell you that if we stand together, if we have a strong transatlantic bond-- North America and Europe together-- then we are much more capable dealing with those threats, challenges, whatever they may be. And that if we have capable forces, high readiness, good intelligence, situational awareness, then we can deal with short-term and long-term surprises.

00:52:52 So instead on our listing... We have a more assertive Russia, we have terrorism, we have cyber-- it's easy to list a lot of potential things that may or may not happen. My focus is less on trying to predict that, because I will not be able to do so, and more, more on how to be able to react, to deal with and manage if and when surprises happen.

Clifford Chanin: Thank you. Also, speaking of uncertainty and preparing for it, we have a question from Emmanuel from the Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management. So where is Emmanuel? Please stand up.

(soft applause)

00:53:32 Audience Member: Thank you.

Clifford Chanin: Your friends are with you.

(laughter)

Audience Member: So you said that it can be difficult to tell what the main issues or, like, the main problems you might face in the future are. So, just to narrow that down, what effects do you think the current U.S. administration will have on NATO in the future?

Clifford Chanin: We left the best for last.

(laughter)

00:53:54 NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Yeah, yeah, no, but... But I think what we see now is that, is that, well, we are in an alliance with 29 different nations with different political leaders with different political opinions about many things. And we also see that there are some serious disagreements between different NATO allies, but also sometimes within the U.S. and, and other NATO allies on important issues as trade, tariffs, the Paris climate accord, the Iran nuclear deal, and other issues.

00:54:25 And my, my strategy, or my, my response to that is, that, well, the best thing would be, if we were able to solve those disagreements on trade, on climate change, but as long as we are not able to solve these disagreements on trade, tariffs, climate, whatever, then it is my and NATO's responsibility to make sure that those disagreements doesn't

undermine the core of the transatlantic partnership that we protect and defend each other.

00:55:03 So meaning that yes, there are differences, but so far-- and I really believe that we will be able to do that also in the, in the future-- we have been able to maintain the security cooperation. Meaning that what we see now is actually that the United States is not redrawing its presence or reducing its presence in Europe, but actually the United States is increasing its military presence in Europe.

00:55:30 For the first time after many, many years, when the United States actually reduced its presence, the United States is now increasing its military presence in Europe. So, so actions speak louder than words. The U.S. have more troops, more exercises. They recently just announced more troops to Germany, more pre-positioned equipment. Even in Norway, there are now, the U.S. have now submarines. So those who question the security relationship between Europe and North America, my answer to them is that, no, actually, we deliver.

00:56:06 We had a successful summit where we made more than 100 concrete decisions on higher readiness, on new command structure, on reforming NATO, on a new training mission in Iraq. So, actually, we decided that North America and Europe should do more together, not less, and the U.S. is proving that by what they actually do on the ground in, in Europe.

00:56:27 So I'm not absolutely certain what you asked me about, but the thing is that... No, but the thing is that... There are differences, and we saw that also during the general debate in the U.N. yesterday, there are differences on issues between NATO allies, and also with the United States and President Trump, but we have proven that we're able to, to maintain, and not only maintain, but strengthen the cooperation within NATO.

00:56:59 Yeah, so that was... I would just add one thing, which is not related to this, but I think it's important for me to say it about Russia. Because we are responding to Russia. We're not mirroring exactly plane by plane, or

tank by tank or whatever, what Russia does, but we are responding to the actions of Russia in Ukraine, in Georgia, and elsewhere.

But we are not... But we want to avoid a new cold war. We want to avoid a new arms race. And we are striving for a better relationship with Russia. And I strongly believe in dialogue with Russia, because Russia is there to stay. Russia is our neighbor, and we need to find a way to live with Russia.

00:57:42

We are all the losers if we move into a new cold war. And, therefore, that strategy of NATO towards Russia is what we call deterrence, defense, and dialogue. And, uh... I met with the secretary... no, Minister Lavrov yesterday, and we disagree on many issues-- for instance, Ukraine. But we agree on the need for political dialogue between NATO and Russia, because we need to defuse tensions. Okay.

00:58:08

Clifford Chanin: Thank you. That is all we have time for. Let me ask that when you leave the auditorium, you leave through the rear doors-- not through the front, through the rear. Oh, I did... just checking. You are a Norwegian, not an American citizen, yes?

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: Yeah, yeah.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah, that's too bad.

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin: But please join me in thanking the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg.

(applause)