

GERMAN CHANCELLOR OLAF SCHOLZ VISITS NATO TALKED WITH SEC GENERAL J.STOLTENBERG

INCLUDING RUSSIA-UKRAINE'S TENSIONS

Paris, Washington DC, 10.12.2021, 22:07 Time

USPA NEWS - NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz to NATO headquarters on Friday (10 December 2021) for talks on a range of issues, including Russia's substantial military build-up in and around Ukraine. Mr Scholz's visit to NATO was part of his first trip abroad as German chancellor, and the Secretary General said he looked forward to working closely with Mr Scholz. "You are a staunch, committed and strong supporter of the transatlantic Alliance", Mr Stoltenberg said at a joint news conference.

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(As delivered)

Chancellor Scholz, dear Olaf, Welcome to NATO.

We have met many times before, but this is our first time we meet in your new capacity. So congratulations on your election as chancellor of Germany. I really look forward to working with you. And I know that you are a staunch, committed and strong support of the Transatlantic Alliance. And I really commend your leadership in making sure that we continue to work together, North America and Europe.-----

Germany is an important Ally. You contribute to our collective security in many different ways.

You are part of our mission in the Baltic region, with German jets regularly patrolling the skies as part of NATO's Baltic air policing. German ships contribute to NATO deployments in the Mediterranean. German troops help to preserve peace in our mission in Kosovo. And the NATO multinational battlegroup you lead in Lithuania helps to deter any aggression.

So today we discussed Russia's substantial military build-up in and around Ukraine. This raises tensions, and undermines security in Europe.-----

We call on Russia to return to diplomacy. And to de-escalate. And to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

NATO Allies agree that any further aggression against Ukraine will come at a high price. And have serious political and economic consequences for Russia. We welcome the talks between President Biden and President Putin. And Germany's long-standing efforts in the Normandy format to find a political solution. NATO remains open to dialogue. It is even more important when tensions are high. And we stand ready to meet in the NATO-Russia Council. To increase transparency, and reduce any risk of miscalculation. In our meeting today we also discussed the importance of strengthening our transatlantic bond in an age of global competition. Where countries like Russia and China are undermining the rules-based international order. Threatening their neighbours. And expanding their nuclear capabilities.-----

Neither Europe, nor North America can face these challenges alone. We can only do so if we stand strong together in NATO.

We also discussed the importance of strengthening the bond NATO and the European Union. The European Union is a strategic partner to NATO. And we are determined to do even more together.-----

So dear Olaf. Once again, welcome to NATO. It is great to have you here and please have the floor.

NATO Spokesperson, Oana Lungescu: Okay, we'll start with ZDF.

Florian Neuhaus (ZDF): Florian Neuhaus, ZDF, German TV. Mr. Stoltenberg first question to you. This afternoon, Russia has urged NATO to break its promise of 2008 with regard to Ukrainian membership in NATO. Are you ready to do that?

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: NATO's position when it comes to our relationship with Ukraine remains unchanged. And it is a fundamental principle that every nation has the right to choose his own path. This is enshrined in many documents and

agreements that Russia has signed too - everything from the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, to the Charter of Paris, to many other accords. It has been clearly stated that any sovereign independent nation, of course, has the right to choose his own path, including what kind of security arrangements he wants to be part of. So NATO's relationship with Ukraine is going to be decided by the 30 NATO Allies and Ukraine, no one else.-----

We cannot accept that Russia is trying to re-establish a system where big powers like Russia have spheres of influence, where they can control or decide, what other members can do. So that's the short answer. We are going to sit down, talk with Russia, but not compromise on the right of every nation in Europe to decide their own path.

NATO Spokesperson Oana Lungescu: Okay, DPA.-----

Michael Fischer, DPA: Michael Fischer, Deutsche Presse-Agentur [question in German].?And Secretary General, I would like to know that you are worried? If you are worried that nuclear deterrence, that there is no commitment to nuclear deterrence and the 2% goal in the coalition treaty?-----

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: First of all, NATO's goal is a world without nuclear weapons. And at the same time, we realize that as long as these weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance, because we don't believe that a world where we get rid of our weapons, while Russia or China and countries like North Korea maintain their nuclear weapons, that's not a safer world. But the way to get there is by balanced, verifiable arms control, and not by unilateral decisions. Therefore, I welcome the coalition platform, which has a clear message also on a nuclear sharing. And I also welcome the very clear commitment in the platform that Germany stands by its commitments to NATO. And also clear language on the need to meet the NATO capability targets.-----

The only way to do this is by continuing to invest more in defence. I think we all understand... the Chancellor Scholz, Olaf and I, we have in common that we both have been Minister of Finance, so we know it's hard to find money. So if you want more money for defence, there has to be less money for something else. So it's never easy to find money for defence. But when we reduce defence spending, when tensions went down after the Cold War, we need to be able to increase when tensions are going up as they are now. Germany has increased over the last years and the platform is clear on the need to invest in capabilities, meet the NATO capability targets and meet NATO commitments, and therefore, I'm looking forward to continue to increased defence spending budget. » Source NATO

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-19695/german-chancellor-olaf-scholz-visits-nato-talked-with-sec-general-jstoltenberg.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSIV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jedi Foster, Rahma Sophia RACHDI

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

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contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619