

NATO CHIEF: ALLIANCE OKS CHANGES TO MEET NEW THREATS

BRUSSELS: NATO's chief yesterday signaled its readiness to deploy forces if needed to protect Turkey against any threat from Russia, as the alliance agreed on more changes to meet today's security threats. "All of this sends a clear message to all NATO citizens. NATO will defend you, NATO is on the ground, NATO is ready," alliance secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg said.

The actions came at a defense ministers' meeting that was overshadowed by growing concerns over Russia's recent military actions in Syria.

The new measures agreed upon include finalized plans, including command and control arrangements, for a NATO Response Force of up to 40,000, twice the current size, and the creation of new NATO headquarters offices in Hungary and Slovakia, Stoltenberg announced at a news conference.

"We see an escalation of Russian military activity in Syria," Stoltenberg said. "And the ministers agreed that Russia's military escalation in Syria raises serious concerns."

On Wednesday, Russian warships fired cruise missiles in the first combined air-and-ground assault with Syrian government troops since Moscow began its military campaign in the Middle Eastern country last week. Over the weekend, Turkey, a NATO member, reported back-to-back violations of its airspace by Russian warplanes.

Stoltenberg, NATO's top civilian official, called Russia's actions and unwavering support for beleaguered Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad "not helpful."

In remarks to reporters earlier, Stoltenberg said the alliance was ready to send help to Turkey if required. "NATO is able and ready to defend all allies, including Turkey, against any threat," he said.

He said NATO had already increased "our capacity, our ability, our preparedness to deploy forces, including to the south, including in Turkey, if needed." Pressed later at the news conference about what NATO intended to do to assist Turkey, which shares a border with Syria, Stoltenberg indicated that the mere existence of the beefed-up response force, as well as a newly created and highly nimble brigade-sized unit able to deploy within 48 hours, may suffice.

"We don't have to deploy the NATO Response Force or the spearhead force to deliver deterrence," Stoltenberg said. "The important thing is that any adversary of NATO will know that we are able to deploy." —AP



GEVGELIJA: Macedonian police officers control a crowd of migrants and refugees as they prepare to enter a camp after crossing the Greek border into Macedonia near Gevgelija yesterday. Macedonia is a key transit country in the Balkans migration route into the EU, with thousands of asylum seekers and migrants - many of them from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia - entering the country every day. —AFP

EU GOVTS AGREE TO GET TOUGH ON DEPORTATIONS

LUXEMBOURG: European Union governments agreed yesterday to step up deportations of illegal immigrants and discussed creating a border guard force among measures to cope with a surge in refugees from Syria's civil war. "Increased return rates should act as a deterrent to irregular migration," interior ministers concluded at a meeting in Luxembourg that included approving "detention" for those who may abscond before expulsion.

They also plan to exert more "leverage" on African and other poor states, including

via aid budgets, to make them accept the return of citizens refused entry to Europe.

In the evening, they will be joined by EU foreign ministers and delegations from Balkan states, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon for talks on stemming migrant flows that have plunged the bloc into crisis, dividing members over how to secure the EU external borders and how to share responsibility for housing refugees. "Returns are always tough," German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said on arrival. "But ... we can only offer space and support to

refugees in need of protection if those who don't need protection don't come or are quickly returned."

In recent years, fewer than 40 percent of people whose asylum claims are rejected have actually then left the EU.

Also being discussed are closer cooperation on external frontiers, especially in the Mediterranean, from where hundreds of thousands have made their way north, prompting some countries to suspend passport-free travel inside Europe's Schengen area.— Reuters

Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
 E Mail: info@kuwaittimes.net
 web@kuwaittimes.net
 Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

BEST OFFERS

From Best Al-Yousifi

29 Free Post
900

39 Free Post
900

15 Free Post
900

6 Free Post
900

1809 809

Credit: Start from 500 - up to 48 month - interest approved