

NATO Defence Ministers Agree on NATO support to assist with the Refugee and Migrant Crisis

11 Feb. 2016 - | Last updated: 11 Feb. 2016 13:14

NATO Defence Ministers agreed that NATO will provide support to assist with the refugee and migrant crisis on Thursday (11 February 2016). “The goal is to participate in the international efforts to stem the illegal trafficking and illegal migration in the Aegean,” Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.



NATO’s Standing Maritime Group 2 is currently deployed in the region and will be tasked to conduct reconnaissance, monitoring and surveillance of illegal crossings in the Aegean. It will also establish a direct link with the European Union’s border management agency, Frontex.

The Secretary General stressed that this mission is *“not about stopping or pushing back refugee boats,”* but about contributing *“critical information and surveillance to help counter human*

trafficking and criminal networks." As part of the agreement, NATO will cooperate closely with national coastguards and the European Union. Military authorities are now working out the details of the mission.

Ministers also agreed to step up NATO support for the international coalition to counter ISIL. *"We agreed in principle to use NATO AWACS surveillance planes to backfill national AWACS capabilities,"* said Mr. Stoltenberg. He noted that this decision will increase the coalition's ability to *"degrade and destroy the terrorist group ISIL, which is our common enemy."*

To improve NATO's ability to respond quickly to hybrid threats, Defence Ministers agreed a detailed implementation plan on the Alliance's hybrid strategy. Ministers also took steps to increase Allies' resilience in areas that are vital in any crisis, such as food and water resources, telecommunications and cyber networks, and transportation. *"Resilience is primarily a national responsibility. But both NATO and the European Union have a role in providing tools and advice in specific areas,"* said the Secretary General.

Ministers also discussed the situation in Afghanistan. They assessed the work of the Alliance-led Resolute Support Mission to train, advice and assist Afghan security forces. Ministers agreed to keep the mission under review, in order to ensure its effectiveness.