

# **Building a better NATO \***

*di Mark Rutte*

Thank you for the introduction, Bronwen.

And it is a pleasure to be at Chatham House, which is still one of the world's leading think tanks on international affairs. So it is a real honour to be here.

It has been producing influential ideas for more than a century.

And this is the place where I want to share the plan to build a better NATO.

This plan will be at the heart of our Summit in The Hague.

I want to thank the United Kingdom for more than seven decades of continuous commitment to NATO.

It makes vital contributions to our shared security.

The British Army leads NATO's multinational force in Estonia.

RAF jets are patrolling over Poland's skies as part of NATO's Air Policing Mission.

NATO's Maritime Command in Northwood directs our naval operations, and Royal Navy ships protect the seas.

With a "NATO-first" policy at its core, I also warmly welcome the UK's new Strategic Defence Review.

It will strengthen and modernise Britain's armed forces and enhance NATO's collective defence.

Commitment has a cost.

And I welcome that the UK government will spend significantly more on defence in the future.

I know we can count on the United Kingdom as we start the next chapter for NATO.

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In just two weeks, I will chair the NATO Summit of Allied leaders in The Hague.

And this Summit will transform our Alliance.

We will build a better NATO.

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One that is stronger, fairer and more lethal.

So that we can continue to keep our people safe, and our adversaries at bay.

Because of Russia, war has returned to Europe.

We also face the threat of terrorism.

And fierce global competition.

Russia has teamed up with China, North Korea and Iran.

They are expanding their militaries and their capabilities.

Putin's war machine is speeding up – not slowing down.

Russia is reconstituting its forces with Chinese technology, and producing more weapons faster than we thought.

In terms of ammunition, Russia produces in three months what the whole of NATO produces in a year.

And its defence industrial base is expected to roll out 1,500 tanks, 3,000 armoured vehicles, and 200 Iskander missiles this year alone.

Russia could be ready to use military force against NATO within five years.

Five years.

Let's not kid ourselves, we are all on the Eastern flank now. The new generation of Russian missiles travel at many times the speed of sound. The distance between European capitals is only a matter of minutes.

There is no longer East or West – there is just NATO.

China is also modernising and expanding its military at breakneck speed.

It already has the world's largest navy.

And its battle force is expected to grow to 435 ships by 2030.

China is also building up its nuclear arsenal.

And it aims to have more than 1,000 operational nuclear warheads, also by 2030.

Those who stand against freedom and democracy are digging in. Preparing for long-term confrontation.

And trying to dominate and divide us.

In 1936, Winston Churchill posed this question during a debate in the House of Commons:

“Will there be time to put our defences in order? .... Will there be time to make these necessary efforts, or will the awful words "too late" be recorded?”

And that is the question for NATO now.

History has taught us that to preserve peace, we must prepare for war.

Wishful thinking will not keep us safe.

We cannot dream away the danger.

Hope is not a strategy.

So NATO has to become a stronger, fairer and more lethal Alliance.

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A stronger NATO means spending much more on our defence.

All Allies will reach the initial target of spending 2% of GDP on defence this year.

That was a pledge made way back in 2014.

Now, we have a concrete plan for the future.

We know what we need.

And we know what to do.

At the Summit in The Hague, I expect Allied leaders will agree to spend 5% of GDP on defence.

It will be a NATO wide commitment.

And a defining moment for the Alliance.

There are two parts to this new defence spending plan.

3.5% will be invested in our core military requirements. While the rest will go towards defence and security related investments, including infrastructure and building industrial capacity.

5% is not some figure plucked from the air, it is grounded in hard facts.

The fact is, we need a quantum leap in our collective defence. The fact is, we must have more forces and capabilities to implement our defence plans in full.

The fact is, danger will not disappear even when the war in Ukraine ends.

Our decisions on defence spending are driven by NATO's battle plans and capability targets.

They define what forces and capabilities Allies need to provide. And last week, NATO Defence Ministers agreed ambitious new targets.

The exact details are classified but we need:

A 400% increase in air and missile defence.

We see in Ukraine how Russia delivers terror from above.

So we will strengthen the shield that protects our skies.

Our militaries also need thousands more armoured vehicles and tanks. Millions more artillery shells.

And we must double our enabling capabilities, such as logistics, supply, transportation, and medical support.

Allies will invest in more warships and aircraft. To give just one example, America's Allies will procure at least 700 F-35 fighter jets in total.

We will also invest in more drones and long-range missile systems. And invest more in space and cyber capabilities.

It is clear, if we do not invest more, our collective defence is not credible. Spending more is not about pleasing an audience of one, it is about protecting one billion people.

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Allies will also make broader defence and security related investments, including infrastructure.

Roads, rail and ports are just as important as tanks, fighters and warships.

We need civilian transport networks that can support military mobility. To get the right forces, to the right place, at the right time.

The home front and the front line are now one and the same. War is no longer fought at a distance – our societies and militaries are in this together.

We will invest more in civil preparedness, so our societies are ready for the day we pray will never come.

NATO works 24/7 to ensure that day never arrives.

We will also spend more to protect our societies against cyber-attacks, sabotage and other threats.

And broader defence and security related investments should include financing and capital improvements to our defence industrial base.

It is clear that right across the Alliance we are not producing enough.

So as we increase defence investment, we need to increase defence production.

More demand means increasing supply. Not higher prices.

And it also means ensuring that the Alliance can produce at scale, and at speed. We need raw industrial capacity, like Sheffield Forgemasters, which I visited this morning with Defence Secretary John Healey.

We need cheaper electricity, access to critical minerals, and more engineering know-how.

Otherwise the commitment to spend 5% of GDP on defence will be lost to production costs, rather than invested in defence.

So we will enhance and expand the industrial base right across the Alliance.

We will support increased defence production, remove barriers to cooperation, and harness cutting edge-technologies.

To borrow from the former Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson, I want NATO to forge its future in the white heat of innovation.

To stay ahead of our adversaries, we must develop and adopt new technologies.

They can be cost effective and deliver the same effect as traditional military “heavy metal”.

On the battlefields of Ukraine, \$400 drones used the right way are taking out \$2 million Russian tanks.

More defence spending and production provides effective deterrence, promotes economic growth, and creates jobs.

The Summit in The Hague will send a clear demand signal to industry. And industry must meet our ambition.

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So we will make NATO stronger by spending and producing more.

And we will make NATO fairer by rebalancing the burden of our security.

With every Ally contributing their fair share.

We all benefit from the protection our transatlantic Alliance provides.

And it is vital that every member of NATO pulls their weight.

Because America has carried too much of the burden for too long.

America's Allies have broad shoulders, and Europe and Canada will do more for our shared security.

And that will be backed by America's rock-solid commitment to NATO.

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As well as becoming stronger and fairer, NATO will become more lethal. Rest assured – we will always be a defensive alliance.

Becoming more lethal means strengthening our deterrence and defence posture.

Providing our militaries with what they need to keep us safe.

And showing any aggressor we can, and will, hit back harder.

With our military power, and our resolve to use it, if necessary, no one should even think about attacking us.

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President Putin does not act like someone who is interested in peace.

Russia continues to strike civilian targets in Ukraine, day after day, night after night. This is violence, for the sake of violence.

We fully support President Trump's efforts to stop the bloodshed.

The people of Ukraine deserve a just and lasting peace.

NATO's practical and political support to Ukraine continues.

Our long-term support is not about prolonging the war.

It is about helping Ukraine defend itself today, and preventing any future aggression.

NATO stands with Ukraine now, and through the challenges ahead.

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In an age of uncertainty a strong transatlantic bond is essential.

And the enduring commitment by all NATO Allies to Article 5 – that an attack on one, is an attack on all – sends a powerful message.

We will defend against any threat, from any direction.

History has shown that North America and Europe working together is a winning combination.

The venue for our summit in The Hague is on Churchillplein – Churchill Square.

His bulldog spirit is alive today in NATO.

We have the confidence, commitment and courage to do whatever it takes to protect our way of life.

There are no second chances when it comes to our security.

So, we will deliver in The Hague.

Friends can be frank with each other.

And there will be tough decisions to take.

But let us not lose sight of what is at stake.

The security of one billion people, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Together, we will secure peace through strength.

Together, we will make our Alliance, stronger, fairer and more lethal.

And together, we will build a better NATO.

Thank you.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Thank you for that speech. Let me ask you, straight away, you've used the word lethal quite a bit. What point are you trying to make through that?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

The point I want to make is, yes, we are still a defensive Alliance, but we are deadly serious that if anyone tries to attack us, that the consequences for that attacker will be devastating, be it Russia or anyone else who tries to do anything against us. And we have to be absolutely clear, and this is not only about the money and the weaponry, it is also about the mentality. That we do realise that there is a lot at stake here and our, yeah, the people trying to act against us must understand this.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

So, what is the main threat to NATO members? Is it Russia, which everyone in Europe is very conscious of, or is it China, which seems to be the focus of the US's alarms in the world?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

The main long-term threat against NATO is Russia. There's no doubt. But you rightly said, there is more than Russia. And NATO was never established to fight only the Soviet Union. It was there to protect NATO territory from anyone who tried to attack us. And what we see at the moment is an enormous build up in China of their military capabilities. I mentioned it in the speech, including what they do navy-wise. They will have, in 2030, a hundred more ships than the US has currently. And they have a defence industrial base in China to build even more ships, which the Americans, at this moment, can absolutely not compete with. This is one of the big issues we have, that when it comes to defence spending, there is an issue with Europe and Canada. When it comes to defence production, there is an issue with Europe, Canada and the United States, because all over the Alliance, we are not producing enough. And China is working together with North Korea, Iran. They are supporting, as we all know, Russia's war effort against Ukraine. So, these four working together is, of course, a relevant development. So yes, Russia, but clearly also focusing on what China is doing. And, of course, the fact that these four are working together and North Korea getting the latest technologies from Russia and others in return for their support to Russia in the war effort against Ukraine.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

So, in terms of strategy, it is Russia, it is China, and it's the others working with them, all of these?

### **NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Yeah, so NATO wants to protect its territory for 1 billion people. And of course, when you ask me, what is your first and main threat, long term, it is Russia, absolutely. But we have to be conscious of what is happening. And I was visiting, two months ago Japan, speaking with the whole senior leadership there. And of course, they are very worried about what's happening in the Pacific. They really very much value the relationship they have with NATO. That is also true for Korea, the Republic of Korea, for Australia, for New Zealand, the so-called Indo-Pacific Four. And it shows you that we cannot think that there is one theatre, which is the which is the Euro-Atlantic theatre. Yes, of course, that's the main theatre we are focusing on. But we have to be conscious of the fact that this is all interconnected with what is happening in the Pacific. And the war in Ukraine, Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine clearly shows that, that all these countries work together.

### **Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Can NATO survive a drawdown of US presence in Europe, and some of the questions that the US has directed at NATO about its value?

### **NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Since President Trump came in office in the first couple of weeks, I got many questions from European leaders, will the US stay committed to NATO? And I told them, I said, well, you might want to put on your television and listen to President Trump when he has President Macron in office, or Prime Minister Starmer or Prime Minister Meloni. When I was visiting, and recently, of course, Chancellor Merz. And there is a total commitment from the American President and down the whole system to NATO, but also an expectation. The expectation is that we in Europe and Canada will indeed equalise in spending with the US. And we have to do that, not only to equalise, but we need that 3.5 core defence spending to be able to deliver the capability targets. Then there is the question, okay, if they then stay Mark with NATO, might they, all of a sudden, decide that SACEUR should be a European general, the Supreme Allied Commander, which has traditionally always been an American general, because there were these rumours. Well, there's your evidence. Last week, the appointment was announced of the new Supreme Allied Commander and holding an American passport. And the third question is, will they, all of a sudden withdraw troops from Europe? There's absolutely no question of that. What they have said is that yes, obviously, for the United States, not only concentrating on the Euro-Atlantic, but also as the biggest worldwide economy and the biggest defence power in the world, they also have to, of course, focus on the Indo-Pacific. They have to focus on the Middle East. And that over time, there will be somewhat more pivoting towards Asia. It's only logical. I'm

not worried about that, but I'm absolutely convinced we will do that in a step-by-step approach. There will be no capability gaps in Europe because of this. And there's absolutely no - and you've seen it when, again, Chancellor Merz visited the White House, when it came to the American troops' presence in Germany, and a clear commitment of the American President on that point.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

So, no capability gaps in Europe over what period can you say that immediately, that the US drawdown won't happen too fast for I think we can say that the US under President Trump has won this argument, that there has that has been there for a very long time, about Europe needing to spend more, and you've embraced that in what you've said, but he has also said A lot of other things. Indeed, about pivoting to Asia. We'll come on to Ukraine in a moment. But on the US, perhaps having fewer troops in Europe, is that not going to leave Europe exposed at any point.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Not at all. I have no worry about that. And why not? Because in the United States, with everybody I speak with, in the Pentagon, in State Department, in the White House, the President the National Security Council. People are aware NATO is not only there To again quote Churchill, not quote, but refer to Churchill in his famous speech in the US Congress in December 41 to prevent the mistake after the First World War, again, after that then ongoing second world war, after Pearl Harbour, when he gave that speech, that the long arm of history will reach out again across the Atlantic Ocean to get the new world involved in a war in the old world. It's not only because of that historical reason in the US, all the generals, all the senior policy makers, totally understand that for the US homeland security, for the defence of the homeland of the mainland, us, its territory, a secure Atlantic, a secure Arctic, and a secure Europe, is crucial. When the Norwegian Prime Minister was visiting, he showed President Trump the pictures of the nuclear submarines just across the border between Norway and Russia. We sometimes forget that Norway has all over Sweden and Finland, this border with Russia, and there is that big, one of the biggest, maybe the biggest, Russian submarine port. And he said, Mr. President, these nuclear submarines are not there to target Norway. They are there to target United States, and what we do collectively is make sure that they can never do that. So that deep realization that our security, Europe, Canada, US is interconnected practically, so, not only for historical reasons, but practically, is deeply ingrained in the US. And at the same time, they have more things to think about like the in the Pacific and the Middle East, and sometimes also when it comes to Africa, which is only logical. So we spending more for them to pivot more towards, for example, the Indo Pacific over time, step by step. Is possible.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

What about Ukraine itself? Does it not weaken NATO in some sense, if the US president says, look, NATO was part of the provocation for Russia of this war, Ukraine started it, and begins to talk about ways of settling that that seem to make many concessions to Russia.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

But look what President Trump did since he came in office.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Many things.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

I agree, but he broke the deadlock when it comes to Ukraine. He broke the deadlock with Russia. And I'm of the opinion that it is only the American President who was able to do this. To start the dialog again with President Putin on how to end this terrible war, and he did. And no criticism of his predecessor. I respect all the politicians in the US, and we work with everybody. But him doing that, breaking that deadlock, and starting that dialog with the Russian President, and then for us in Europe to think, okay, we can, in a couple of months, then end all of this. Of course, no, this takes time. It is a step by step approach, but it is clear that he closely coordinates with European Allies, including the UK Prime Minister and others here in Europe and with Canada on all the steps he's taking. And every phone call he has with President Putin, he prepares with Europeans, and he then briefs out to the Europeans and the Ukrainians afterwards. But him doing this, I think, is extremely important, because it is the only way to, step by step, bring the Russians to a position where they want to end it.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

To end it and not continue. So, in your view, what would be the terms of that kind of agreement that would persuade Russia to stop where it is now, or to move back?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

I don't want to make it even more difficult by having, as NATO Secretary General, start to philosophise here in an open session about what it might look like. But what we do know, what we all agree on, is that whatever the long-term cease fire, or, even better, a real peace agreement, will look like, the most important thing is that post that long term cease fire and or peace agreement, we have to make sure that it is lasting, that it is durable, and that Putin will never, ever try to do this again. And this is why Keir Starmer, the British Prime Minister, together with the French President, and now with a large group of European countries and Canada, is working on what security

guarantees might look like, so that going forward, we can be assured that when there is a peace deal or a ceasefire, that we have the plans in place, we can implement them on the day after that happens. And that preparation, I think, in close coordination with the Americans, is again evidence that this transatlantic relationship is very strong. You've

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

You've mentioned Canada a couple of times, and many people have asked whether NATO can accommodate a member that is threatening the sovereignty of another member as the US has been with Canada.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Well, obviously, as Secretary General of NATO, I never comment about discussions between NATO Allies, but I've seen a very successful visit of the Canadian Prime Minister to the White House. So it's my impression that whatever issues there are, they're dealing with that in an amicable way.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

And NATO, turning back to Europe then, NATO is working, many people have said, very closely with the European Union at the moment. But there are still big differences of opinion within the European Union, within European members, particularly on Russia. How do you accommodate that? You're obviously not responsible for what all these Prime Ministers and Presidents say, but still, you are trying to arrange some kind of agreement of strategy between them. Now, thinking of Hungary and Slovakia's attitudes to Russia, for example.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

And by the way, they're all also Allies within NATO, both Hungary and Slovakia, and we are always able, in the end, to come to an agreement with the 32. NATO was never established, to have a Kumbaya where we would immediately, from minute one, agree on everything. So to have that debate as democratic societies, within a democratic Alliance, which is based on unanimity, I think, only strengthens the Alliance. And when it comes to the cooperation with the EU, you're right. We are working closely together with European Commission, with Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the Commission, António Costa, the chair, the President of the European Council, but also with the High Representative, Kaja Kallas, with the President of the European Parliament, with Andrius Kubilius, the Defence Commissioner. There is a real close cooperation where we all agree that when it comes to the division of labour, NATO is about setting of the hard standard setting, making sure that we know what we need in terms of capabilities, the standards, when it comes to our systems and weaponry, et

cetera. And the EU is in the position of the power of the internal market. For example, getting the industrial base going, making sure that these investments will take place, that ultimately, in a couple of years, we still, we will not conclude that we still buy the same amount of revenue, which is far from enough, but at a higher price, and that cooperation is really working very well.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

How would you explain to people who are running a government now, a democratic government, how to explain to their voters why so much money is suddenly needed on defence? The numbers are going up, this government has taken time to commit to two and a half percent. Suddenly, people are talking about three, even five, as you're saying. So, they have to go as this government will. It on Wednesday has its spending review in Parliament, an illustration of how much money there isn't for lots of things. How would you suggest to them that they explain to voters why this is so necessary now?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

I would explain it in a way by saying that the world we thought we were entering in after the Berlin Wall came down is definitely gone. This whole idea that we would have a sort of pleasant, peaceful living together with the Russians is gone. That Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin is clearly expansionistic. What he has done with Ukraine is really staggering. The amount of death on both sides, also on the Russian side, by the way, is amazing. The investments he is making, his economy is on a total war footing. As I said in my speech, let me repeat it again. NATO economy is 25 times bigger than Russia. It's 50 trillion, and the Russian economy is 2 trillion. That 2 trillion economy is producing four times as much ammunition as the whole of NATO is producing at the moment. And you can ask any general, and he will tell you, yes, drones and AI, et cetera, but Mark, the core of every war will always start with stockpiles of ammunition. You can never, ever allow for a situation where your ammunition piles are not sufficiently stocked. And here, the Russians are outpacing us four to one, four times as much as we are producing. And again, we are 25 times bigger. And then look at our air defence systems. We simply do not have enough in the UK, all over Europe, in Canada, the US, in the whole of NATO. And these are huge investments. We need five times as many systems to defend ourselves against missiles and an air defence in general, that's a 400% increase. It's huge investments. Our manoeuvrable land formations, we simply do not have enough. The UK, Germany, all over Europe, we do not have enough. Our command and control centres, our long range weapons. So, the clear gaps are there, and we have a heavily reconstituting Russia at a pace which is really threatening. They cannot mount a successful attack against NATO territory now, but in three to five years, they might be able. And this is how I would explain this.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

I wanted to ask you exactly on this point, and you put a lot of weight on that, exactly that sentence in your speech, is that based on military capability, or is it based on a reckoning of their planning? What did you mean by picking out three to five years that they could attack NATO territory?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Yes, so for example, last week, it was the German Chief of Defence saying by 2029, that's in four years, they might be ready to do that. And this is just based on the military people telling us, look what Russia is doing, look where we are. Yes, we can still defend ourselves, but if we do not start today with getting our defence industrial base in order, getting the ammunition production going, getting our air defence systems production going. Take the Patriots, the most important air defence system we have, or the most advanced at the moment. You will get it in 10 years if you order it today. And the question is bit like in the old times of the Soviet Union, that you can ask the return question in the morning or the afternoon. Why is that important? Yes, in the afternoon, the F-35 will arrive. So, these are the timelines we are facing at the moment. And I'm only slightly exaggerating here. So, and therefore, what keeps me awake at night is not only the spending part. I think we will get there at the Summit. What I'm really getting awake at night, where I'm staying awake at night is because of the defence production. Because for your credible deterrence, it is not only about spending and people. It is also about being able to produce, of course, the latest technologies, drones, et cetera. I commend, for the UK put in the defence review on all of this. It is really great stuff, and we need that, but you still also need to make sure that you can produce the classic big-ticket items.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Hence your visit to Sheffield. Let's go to questions. There are tons online. Let me start over here. Let me start at that side and take those two at the edge. Let's take them in.

**Carl Dinnen, ITV News**

Thanks very much. Carl Dinnen from ITV News. You've just come from Downing Street where talked with the Prime Minister. Did he agree that Britain would spend the 3.5% that you want as core defence spending? And what is the timeline that you have agreed with him for that?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Well, obviously I don't have a vote in the NATO Summit, I'm holding the gavel. And it's also not up to me to disclose what we discussed, because I don't think that's fair.

But let me just try to answer your question a different way. First of all, I've seen sometimes in the British press that there is the Defence Review, and now there is this proposal I made about the 5%, the 3.5 core and 1.5 defence and security related spending. So then people are saying, hey, there is a discrepancy. I don't think there is. Why not? Because every country is working in cycles to constantly update its own defence strategy. That's exactly what the UK is doing. And I'm really impressed with what John Healey, the Defence Secretary and the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary David Lammy have brought out last week, because it's exactly what we need. The drones, the latest technology, but also, for example, investing in six factories producing ammunition. I mean, you heard me about my worries about ammunition. I mean, this is at the core of the of the UK Defence Review, including the spending targets together. And then there is, and this is happening in many countries, in different cycles, et cetera. And there is this Summit coming up, discussing how we get over time with a credible path to get there, a longer term goal of this 5% defence spending, so I don't see a discrepancy here. We will, as I was here today, I will visit Italy later this weekend, and also Sweden, and I will be in Canada next week, so we will have many more consultations, and we will discuss the details, of course, in Brussels. I really think we will get to a common position.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay, I'm going to take a few more down here. Let's take the next along and then in the row behind.

**Harry Fawcett, Channel 4 News**

Harry Fawcett from Channel 4 News, you said that the 1.5% defence related spending was grounded in reality, and it's not for an audience of one. It is though, it seems like a happy coincidence that 1.5 plus 3.5 equals five. And there is some criticism that there is an elasticity in how to define what comprises that kind of spending. So how do you respond to those concerns, and is there a metric to define exactly what should fall within that 1.5%

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

So what we did, we have the old 2% which was agreed in Wales, and there are clear definitions what you can count to the 2% core defence spending. We are not going to change those criteria, so they will remain and the 2%, if I get my way, will be 3.5%. But then, when we were discussing all of this, and also look at the UK Defence Review, which is also spending a lot of time on this, and a lot of is discussing this. Yes, there is the core defence spending. But you need bridges which are able to hold the tank. Sometimes you are even not daring with your car to cross the bridge, let alone with the

tank. You need the defence industrial base to be developed. For example, this factory in Sheffield was bought by the UK government because it is delivering core capabilities which are essential to the UK defence requirements. Buying such a factory is not a defence spent in the 2%. But still, you need to do it, and you need to develop the defence industrial base, because we simply do not have enough. And then we have the issue of societal preparedness. When you watch Norway or Finland or Sweden, what they are doing in terms of having the whole of society to understand what their role will be, be it active, or at least not getting in the way of the military people if war breaks out or a natural disaster hits. I mean, in many other countries, my country, many other countries, we are not nearly there. So, all this spending also needs to be done. And we have calculated this as roughly 1.5%. We are now discussing in Brussels, the more specific items, but these are the big ones. So defence industrial base, developing your infrastructure in a way that it can help you to move from A to B with military and equipment, but also this big issue of preparing your civilian populations for whatever might happen, and there's a lot of money, so we need to do that.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay, I'm going to take one in the, yes, and then I'm coming to some over here.

**Edward Lucas, The Times**

Hello, Edward Lucas from The Times. and the times you mentioned in your speech improvements to the defence finance and investment. And I was wondering if you could elaborate on that a bit. Is this an allusion to the idea of a defence bank, which John Healey was talking about at the weekend? It's not just a matter of spending more money, it's spending it more effectively, which you've alluded to.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

There are a couple of initiatives out there, so I was not particularly alluding to that, but I know of these initiatives, and we follow them with great interest, because everything making it possible to get the money and spend it where we need to spend it is positive. But it's always a bit tricky for me to get into the details of each of these initiatives. But take another initiative, which is the European Union, what the EU is doing with ReArm Europe, which is an 800 billion package in which you have the 150 billion SAFE program. You could also argue that that is also part of freeing up the money at a national level to make it possible for countries to invest enough. So it is really optimising here. But it's also about your defence industrial base, and there might be opportunities when, maybe in the future, you would have unavoidable closures of some big industrial plants for whatever reason, because this is part of your normal economic cycle, and of course, always regrettable, but not always avoidable. That you look in a

pragmatic way whether this is an opportunity now to use that particular asset to converge into defence production. So all of these issues are falling under that sentence.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

I'm going to take a few which are about Ukraine or fighting -

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

You don't do the BBC [inaudible]?

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

No. Alright, go on.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Don't have to be in a fight for you.

**Jonathan Beale, BBC**

Jonathan Beale from BBC, you didn't actually answer the question that Carl asked -

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Next question -

**Jonathan Beale, BBC**

- which was, what is the deadline for this. Is it 2032 or 2035? Are you saying also that spending 3% is the same as 3.5% because it doesn't, to me, that seems a little bit odd? And then finally, are you going to include, are you going to allow the UK Government to include, they include, at the moment in their 2.3% costs on security services, MI5, MI6. Do you consider that to be core defence spending? Thank you.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Well, first of all, the definitions we use when it comes to the present 2% and for the UK, that is now 2.3 moving into 2.5 and I also heard the number of three. We are not changing these definitions, and there's always a little bit room of flexibility, but not a lot. And so that's something there, I know from my previous role that we had many debates with NATO what the Netherlands could figure in the defence spending and not and there's always a little bit of negotiation going on there, and then in the end, you somehow reach a consensus, right? So, I'm not aware of what exactly the debates are between the UK and NATO on what they figure in the 2.3 or 2.5 let's say in the 2%. But I would not be amazed that that debate takes place, because most Allies are having those discussions. When it comes to your first question, I have a clear view on when we should achieve that. I keep that to myself, because we are having these consultations now with Allies, and these discussions are ongoing, and we will, in the end, agree on a

date when we have to be there. For me, it is important that it will not be, as I said last weekend when we met in Brussels, it will be a flat line and then at the year where we have to achieve the 5% the 3.5, and the 1.5, a hockey stick, and then all of a sudden, because you cannot spend all that money in one year, there is an absorption capacity issue. You can only spend so much extra each year. So there has to be a credible path. That, for me, is very important, that countries commit to that and develop that path, and share that with NATO, so that we would not have the same as in 2014. We commit all to 2%, the UK was on 2%, Greece was on 2%, the US was on 2%. But basically, till Trump became President, nothing happened. And then of a sudden, everybody woke up in Brussels in 2018 and the spending went up. So, we have to have a credible path there. And then on the, I didn't understand the three. So, what I propose is 3.5 core defence spending by date x, and that's being discussed now, and 1.5 on defence related. So, we are not putting out a number of three anywhere.

### **Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay. So, anyone got a question on Ukraine and Russia, there's quite a lot online. I want to take a whole group. Let me take several on that, (inaudible) who's here, and then I'm going to come right to the back.

### **Question**

Thanks very much, Bronwen. Thanks, Secretary General, for coming and speaking to us. I have a question, two summits in a row, Ukraine was said that it has an irreversible path to NATO. Fast forward, this spring, we hear that United States is perhaps ready to offer Russia a concession, which means Ukraine will not join the NATO. So my question is whether such concession would make NATO better or worse, and will Ukraine join you in The Hague?

### **NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

First of all, my aim now is for this Summit to have a very concise list of conclusions. So a communiqué which is concise. You know, from the last Washington Summit, I think it was 60 pages, 19 paragraphs. It will be considerably more condensed than that, and that means that you do not always have to repeat every sentence and every previous made commitment, because it stands. The Strategic Concept stands, the Washington communiqué stands. So this, the irreversible path of Ukraine into NATO is there, and it is my assumption, it is still there after the Summit. Whether it is again in the communiqué or not, I think that's not relevant, because all the language we previously agreed on is there until we decide it is not any longer there. So I pretty much presume that at my presser after the Summit, I will repeat that sentence as being part of what NATO agreed and we are building the bridge as we are speaking through the command

in Wiesbaden, through the organisation in Poland we have jointly with Ukraine to capture all the lessons, through the Comprehensive Assistance Package, all the other activities, of course, our team in Kyiv, the NATO team in Kyiv, working closely with the Ukrainian government. So, all of this is there, and building basically the bridge. And what I would assume that the NATO Summit will be really about spending. It will be about production. Of course, there will be Ukraine in the communiqué, no doubt, but don't expect endless paragraphs of restating what we already said in the past. That's all there, and it will stay there. And then on America. But not only the US has come out for a long time against Ukraine joining NATO. There have been other Allies too, take Hungary, take Slovakia, and others who have said we are against that. So, the language is there. There is this irreversible path into NATO. And again, I think that the The Hague communiqué will be really very much focused on a few issues.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay, thanks. Let me go right to the back, and then here in the front, yep.

**Question**

Chris Ben Ellison, member. Secretary General, thanks very much for your talk and the questions. You emphasise production in Russia is about four times that of NATO, but they're not building stockpiles. They have no stockpiles. They are using that. Is it fair to say then that the clock starts ticking and the risks to NATO starts increasing once we get a sustainable ceasefire, and that production is put into stockpiles.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Statement of fact, I think. And by the way, our assumption at the moment is that even whilst the war against Ukraine is continuing, that they are still able to slightly increase stockpiles. But that's debatable, but I think to your question, I mean, that's a statement of fact,

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Yeah, okay, let me come over here to the front.

**Francis Tony, The Telegraph**

Thank you. Thank you, Secretary General, I'm Francis Tony, The Telegraph. There's a, an American outlet this morning that's describing Trump's reaction to the deep strikes on Russian territory by the Ukrainian drones as being badass. I wonder what your reaction was to that, because and whether you agree with Kyiv that to end this war is going to require additional long-range strikes into Russia to take out its industrial capacity.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Well, to end this war, we need Putin to come to the negotiating table, and not with this historian who is now popping up in Istanbul twice and again, telling us about the history of Russia and Ukraine from whatever the 12th century, I don't know what it was, and constantly restating what they stated already in 2022. You need a Russia which is serious, wants to negotiate and end the war. And to get there. It all, I think, starts, of course, with keeping Ukraine strong in the fight. But also, we need what President Trump has been doing, breaking the deadlock with Putin, starting that dialogue. I really think it starts from there. And when it comes to what happened Sunday, a week ago, let's not forget what the Ukrainians were doing was taking out capabilities of Russia to hit innocent civilians in Ukrainian cities and communities going about their daily lives, not being in the military, just normal, average citizens, as we are sitting here in this room, being under the threat of these Russian capabilities, and in a very innovative way, they diminished to a certain extent. And we don't know exactly what the extent is, but of course, it had a considerable impact, it seems, the capabilities of Russia on this.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Quite a few questions online about whether you're expecting a big summer offensive from Russia, either against Ukraine or looking at Lucy Rodgers' question, military images of Russian bases along NATO's eastern flank, but I think the thrust of the questions is about a summer offensive against Ukraine.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

We don't expect any offensive against NATO territory. There's no reason to believe that, because again, the next three to five years, he knows that we actually will be devastating for Russia, so they will not do that. But we have to make sure, three to five years, he still knows that it is devastating, so that we are prepared. And when it comes to Ukraine, I'm not predicting what might happen on the Russian side. What we have to do is to make sure that Ukraine has what it needs, the ongoing military support, the United Kingdom, by the way, we are here in London, this country is at the forefront since the start of the war, Boris Johnson, Rishi Sunak and now Keir Starmer, providing consistent leadership when it comes to keeping Ukraine in the fight and, of course, together with other European nations, but UK has really been one of the leaders in this effort.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Let's go right at the back. Yes.

**Question**

Thank you. My name is (inaudible) from the Middle East team at Chatham House. My question is not about Ukraine, but about Russia. Do you see Russians or the Chinese playing any role in the Red Sea, in arming the Houthis or training them? And overall, where does the NATO see the Red Sea crisis, let's say your top 10 of risks. Does that flag on your radar overall? Thank you.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Well here our biggest worry, of course, is with Iran and the fact that Iran is part of this foursome. This really awful foursome of North Korea, China, Iran and Russia. And I have no reason to believe, and no one has any reason to believe that Iran is doing this because they just want to be friendly to the Russians. We assume that they get a love for this in return, particularly money. And as we know, Iran uses, uses this money directly and through its proxies to stir conflict in the Middle East. So there is at least an indirect link, as there is a link between what North Korea is doing, supporting Russia's war effort, getting missile technology in return, which is posing a threat to the US mainland.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Thank you. Let me come, in the orange.

**Danielle Sheridan, The Telegraph**

Danielle Sheridan from The Telegraph.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

How many of you are here from The Telegraph?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Big newspaper.

**Danielle Sheridan, The Telegraph**

I was almost not going to say where I was from actually. Do you think this Wednesday we should see the Chancellor raise taxes in order to cover the defence spending that you think is required?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Well, it's not up to me to decide, of course, how countries pay the bill. I mean, what I know is that if we want to keep our societies safe, and look, if you do not do this, if you would not go to the 5%, including the 3.5% core defence spending, you could still have the National Health Service, or in other countries, their health systems, the pension system, etc., but you better learn to speak Russian. I mean, that's the consequence. I cannot. I mean, when I came to NATO, people sometimes told me,

yeah, but Mark, bringing these brutal facts out in the open might also rattle our population. Yes, they'd better be rattled, because this is a reality. I mean, let's be honest. It's our task as politicians to be brutally honest how we see the facts and what is the... and the facts are clearly there that Russia is able, within five years to mount a credible attack against NATO territory, if we do not now start to take these decisions. And then, of course, is the issue how to finance that. Well, that's up to national politicians, and there are always... I mean, when I was in politics, you had three sources to do this from. One is taxation, another is savings elsewhere, and the third one is a higher deficit. I mean, in the end, politics is making choices in scarcity. This is why you choose your politicians. And then a centre left politician will be, make different choices from a central right politician. But okay, that's up to the national government, but my point is, we've got to do it.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

The Dutch government, which was pursuing very much your line about increasing defence spending and support for Ukraine, has collapsed. Do you feel that...?

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

But not because of this problem.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Because of the difficulty in spending. All right, let me just try and tuck in a couple more, at least one more question. Right here on the edge. There were lots and lots and lots of hands up, and I'm going to go here in the middle. Let me take two together (inaudible).

**Question**

Hi there. Johnny Singh, Chatham House member, you mentioned critical minerals. Here. Yes, hi. You mentioned critical mineral minerals in your speech. I wonder, what role do you envisage NATO has in either securing or procuring or the supply routes around critical minerals?

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay, let me take, there's one on the in the edge of the aisle there, and I'm going to get in the front here as well.

**Question**

Yes. Thank you very much. My name is (inaudible), and as a citizen of The Hague, I wish you all the best and good luck with the Summit in a few weeks.

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

You already have left the city.

**Question**

I'll be back. I'll be back before the Summit. But I say so as a citizen of The Hague, but also as a worried NATO -

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

This is absolutely wonderful. Do you have a question?

**Question**

Yes, I do. I do, apart from wishing good luck, my question has nothing to do which has been on the table so far, but it's about climate change. And I just wondered, for EU Commissioner Hoekstra warned about the security threats as a result of climate change. And I wondered what your thoughts wound up with this increased spending, how that has factored into your thinking?

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay, thank you. And I'm just going to slide in this one here. This one here at the at the front, you have a microphone. Sorry.

**Question**

My name is (inaudible). I'm a Chatham House member, and I work for Mail Online. I'm sure you've paid attention to Elon Musk's feud with Donald Trump. What view does NATO take of this and how has it sort of impacted your war gaming strategies? Because of you know dependence on Starlink and you know SpaceX.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

I was waiting for you to make the connection, thank you very much. Everything as it was, right, critical minerals, climate change...

**NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte**

Quickly on critical minerals role here for NATO will be a typical ordinating role. So we provide the platform to discuss this wherever necessary, because logistics, supply chain, all these issues, making sure, for example, that when it comes to ammunition production, we have all the basic materials to do that. Obviously, nations are working on this, Allies, but NATO can always play, provide a platform to have that discussion more and more coordinated. On climate change. Obviously, this is a case in point. What we are seeing is that, for example, the Arctic is opening up, so it has an impact. And the fact that the Russians and the Chinese are now sailing in the Arctic, and that the seven high north countries, US, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland have asked NATO to become more involved here, and we will do that. Is clear evidence of

this. And so we have the issue of icebreakers, China, Russia, active there. And this has to do with the fact that these routes are opening up. And this has to do with the fact that global warming is taking place. And NATO has, after long consideration, decided not to have a view on what is happening at the moment.

**Bronwen Maddox, Director and Chief Executive Chatham House**

Okay, thank you. We are going to have to stop there. I'm so sorry. Thank you for the terrific questions online. I didn't take so many because they overlap with what we had discussed already, but they were great and great to have them. Thank you everyone for coming and for your excellent questions. Please join me in thanking the Secretary General.