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WORLD NEWS

NATO's new spearhead force trains to reassure the east

MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, ASSOCIATED PRESS | June 18, 2015 | Updated: June 18, 2015 9:14am

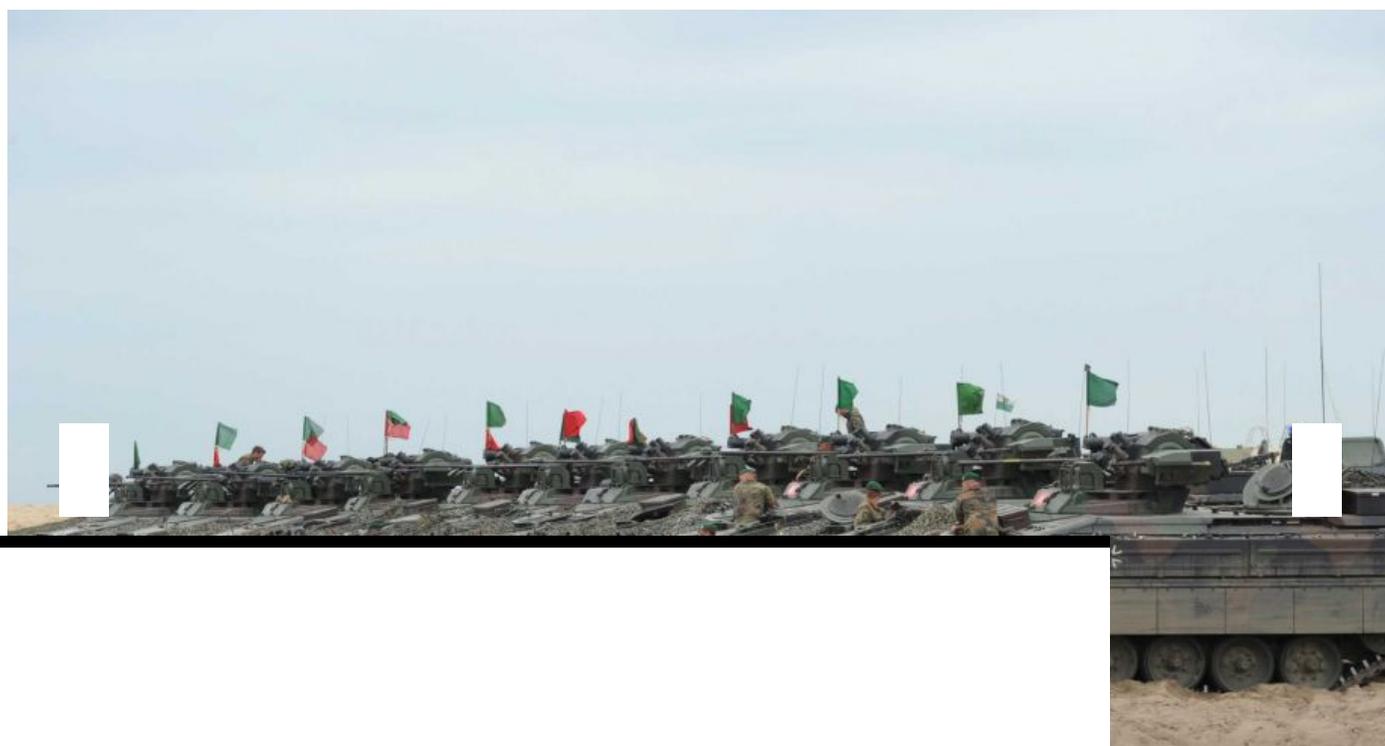




IMAGE 1 OF 15

German army tanks are lined up after the NATO Noble Jump exercise on a training range near Swietoszow Zagan, Poland, Thursday, June 18, 2015.

ZAGAN, Poland (AP) — NATO and Poland's leaders say the alliance's defense ministers will discuss next week U.S. plans to base equipment for one brigade in its eastern members.

NATO Secretary General Jens

Stoltenberg and Poland's Defense

Minister Tomasz Siemoniak spoke after the first action exercise by the alliance's new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, or spearhead.

U.S. F-16 fighter jets, transport helicopters, Polish tanks firing live munition and more than 2,000 troops from nine nations took part in the 90-minute demonstration of the spearhead's capabilities at a sand-and-shrubs test range surrounded by woods in Zagan, in southwestern Poland.

The exercise showed that "we are delivering on the promises we made together at the last summit of NATO," Stoltenberg later said.

Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, NATO's supreme commander for Europe, joined defense ministers from the Netherlands, Norway and Germany to watch the spectacular exercise that involved helicopters airlifting troops, tanks destroying a mine field to get to enemy positions — all of which led to neutralizing "irregular forces," as they were described in the scenario.

The exercise was part of the alliance's massive maneuvers held this month on its eastern flank to reassure eastern members worried by Russia's hostile actions in Ukraine, Poland's neighbor.

Stoltenberg said the issue of basing U.S. equipment in the region "will be addressed at next week's meeting of NATO defense ministers," and that "no decision has been taken yet."

Siemoniak said he has been in talks with U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter over placing equipment in Poland and in four other eastern NATO nations, and said Poland was ready for the move as far as logistics and organization goes.

"I expect a decision in the coming weeks and I hope it will be a positive one," Siemoniak said.

"This time of decades of peace after the Cold War is over," he added. "We will not defend our European welfare if we don't do more for our own security."

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