Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

INSIGHT

Previewing NATO's Madrid Summit

June 24, 2022

Heads of state and government from NATO's 30 member states (see **Figure 1**) are scheduled to hold a summit in Madrid, Spain, on June 29-30, 2022. The summit is expected to address five main agenda items that relate to key congressional concerns about Russia's war in Ukraine, alliance force posture and defense spending, and NATO enlargement:

- A bolstered defense posture in response to Russia's war in Ukraine
- A new Strategic Concept outlining NATO's purpose and core tasks
- Increased support for aspiring NATO members Ukraine, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Proposed NATO enlargement to Finland and Sweden
- Renewed commitment to NATO defense spending goals

Defending Against Russian Aggression

In Madrid, the allies plan to endorse a heightened NATO defense posture in the eastern part of the alliance. A key objective will be to move from NATO's current "tripwire" posture, intended to deter a Russian military invasion, to a "forward defense posture" that could drive back an invasion. The new force structure is to encompass four main areas:

- Larger forward presence of combat forces
- New regional command and control headquarters
- More pre-positioned equipment and weapons, including heavy weapons systems
- Higher-readiness force model, with forces preassigned to defend specific allies

Since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, NATO has more than tripled the number of allied soldiers deployed along the alliance's eastern flank. Approximately 40,000 allied troops are now taking part in NATO defense and deterrence missions in the eastern part of the alliance.

Some NATO members have called for permanent stationing of substantially more combat forces. Rather than endorse such proposals, the allies are expected to support a continuation of the posture changes made since early 2022, reinforced by pre-positioned heavy weaponry and frequent rotations of additional high-readiness forces to the alliance's eastern flank.

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
IN11957

A New Strategic Concept

In Madrid, the allies plan to adopt a new Strategic Concept outlining NATO's fundamental security tasks and challenges (the current Strategic Concept is from 2010). The new blueprint is expected to reaffirm NATO's three core tasks (collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security), but it could include significant changes, especially with respect to Russia and China. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said NATO will refer to Russia as "the most significant and direct threat to our security" and will address "systemic challenges" posed by China's "assertive behavior." Additional areas of emphasis could include a renewed commitment to democratic values, enhanced societal and economic resilience, cyber defense and hybrid threats, and climate change.

Possible Accession of Finland and Sweden

The allies also plan to address potential NATO enlargement to Finland and Sweden following the countries' May 18, 2022, applications for membership. As of June 23, 2022, NATO's accession process was on hold due to objections from NATO member Turkey. Prior to Turkey raising objections, NATO officials had indicated membership invitations could be extended at the Madrid summit, given strong support from all other allies. Since then, Secretary General Stoltenberg has stressed that "the Madrid Summit was never a deadline" but that efforts to address Turkey's concerns—related to perceived Finnish and Swedish support for Kurdish groups that Turkey views as terrorists—are ongoing. (See CRS Insight IN11949, *NATO: Finland and Sweden Seek Membership*.)

Defense Spending

The allies are expected to renew their commitment to NATO's defense spending goals, including a 2014 pledge made for national defense budgets to meet or exceed 2% of GDP by the year 2024. According to NATO, 2021 marked the seventh consecutive year of increased defense spending by European allies and Canada, with eight allies meeting the 2% spending target. U.S. and NATO officials expressed concern in 2021 and early 2022, however, that economic turbulence connected to the COVID-19 pandemic was slowing defense spending across the alliance. These fears have eased as allied governments have moved to increase defense investments in response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, including a German commitment to more than double defense expenditures beginning in 2022.

Considerations for Congress

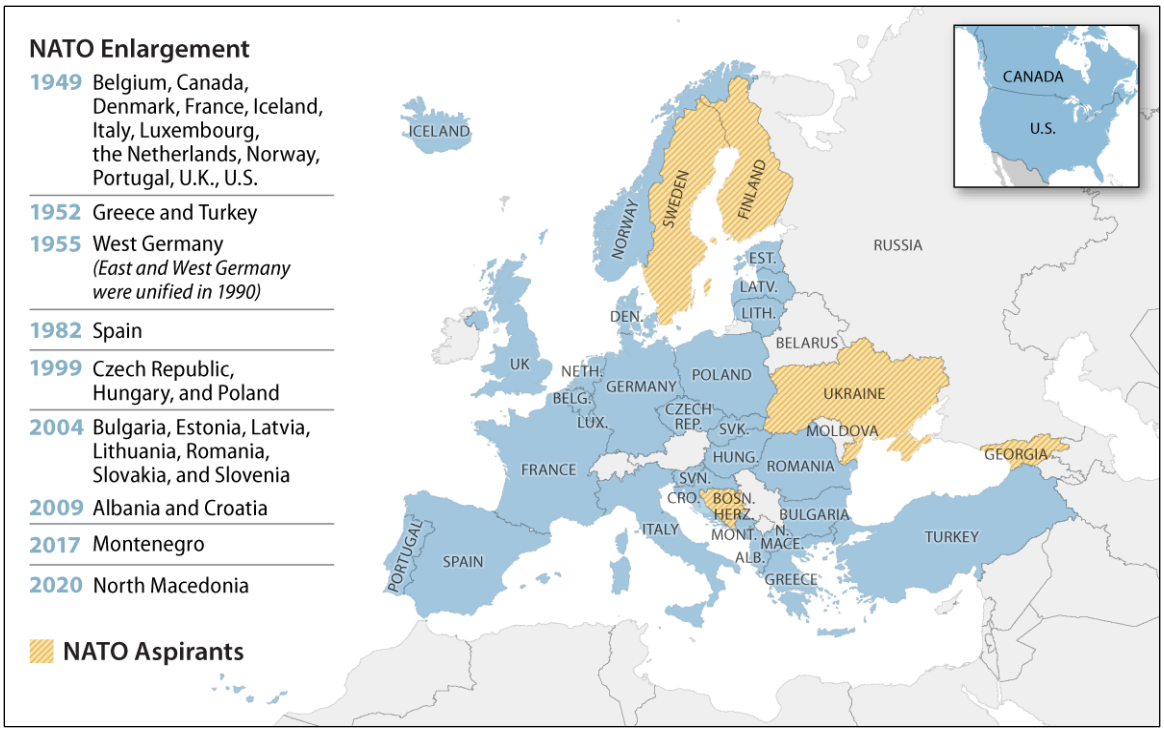
In Madrid, allied leaders plan to address numerous policy issues that have been of sustained interest to Members of Congress, including

- **NATO and U.S. Force Posture in Europe.** Russia's invasion has heightened concerns about NATO's capacity to defend against a possible Russian military attack. Key factors could include the U.S. role in responding to an attack and other member states' willingness and capacity to respond, maintaining allied unity on the appropriate response to a potential attack, and the appropriate U.S. and NATO force posture in Europe.
- **Future of NATO-Russia Relations**. NATO's new Strategic Concept is expected to outline fundamental changes to NATO's approach to Russia, including a more robust allied force posture in Eastern Europe. Members also may reassess NATO's prior willingness to negotiate with Russia on European security arrangements, including arms control and NATO's nuclear force posture.
- **NATO's Role in Supporting Ukraine.** Congress has supported NATO's consistent rejection of Russian demands for a halt to NATO's "open door" enlargement policy.

Russia's invasion could raise questions about NATO's obligations to Ukraine and other aspirants for membership, Georgia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the future of NATO enlargement.

- **NATO's Approach to China.** Some Members of Congress have urged NATO to do more to address the potential security implications of growing Chinese engagement in Europe. Although NATO has identified China as posing "systemic challenges," some European allies remain reluctant to antagonize a major economic partner and worry about the broader implications of a more confrontational relationship with Beijing.
- **Possible Accession of Finland and Sweden.** Members of Congress have voiced support for NATO enlargement to Finland and Sweden, including through resolutions introduced in both the House (H.Res. 1130) and the Senate (S.Res. 646). U.S. approval of Finnish and Swedish accession would require the advice and consent of the Senate.

Figure 1. NATO Countries and Aspirants



Source. CRS Graphics. Map updated June 2022.

Notes. In addition to Finland and Sweden, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine aspire to NATO membership. In 2008, NATO allies agreed that Georgia and Ukraine would one day become NATO members; Bosnia was granted a Membership Action Plan in 2010.

Author Information

Paul Belkin
Analyst in European Affairs

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.