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## **NATO TO JOIN THE US-LED COALITION AGAINST ISIS FIGHTING IN IRAQ AND SYRIA**

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Nato chief confirms European body will assist in fight against terrorism in a non-combat role ahead of summit with Donald Trump

French pilots carry out a drill during a NATO training exercise in Corsica on

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) is joining the US-led international coalition fighting Iraq and Syria based extremists Isis, the institutions secretary general has confirmed.

This will send a strong message of unity and Natos commitment to the fight against terrorism, Jens Stoltenberg said in Brussels on Thursday, ahead of a Nato summit attended by new US President Donald Trump.

Mr Trump is seeking to push the US Nato allies to take on a more active role against extremism. On landing in the city on Wednesday he told reporters that the deadly suicide bombing of Manchester Arena earlier this week underlined how sorely greater cooperation is needed in combating terrorism.

While all 28 nations in Nato have individually joined the coalition - some sending war planes to assist in US-led bombing of the jihadists positions in Syria and Iraq - the alliance has not formally followed suit.

Mr Stoltenberg was keen to stress Natos role would not involve combat, instead expanding its use of surveillance planes, stepping up Iraqi training programmes, and creating a new cell in Brussels to co-ordinate anti-terror intelligence and planning. All 28 nations are also expected to reaffirm a commitment to spending two per cent of annual GDP on defence.

There was reportedly pushback against the plans from member states Germany and France, AFP quoted diplomatic sources as saying, but worries were smoothed out ahead of Mr Stoltenbergs announcement.

Nato as an institution will join the coalition, one senior diplomat involved in the discussions told Reuters news agency. The question is whether this just a symbolic gesture to the United States. France and Germany believe it is.

During his election campaign Mr Trump branded the Cold War era American-European military alliance obsolete, but has reneged on his promise to scrap it since entering office in January.

Donald Trump brands suicide bomber behind Manchester attack 'evil loser'

The new president faced a colder welcome in Brussels than he received during the first stops of his inaugural foreign tour - Riyadh, Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

He flew to Brussels from a 24 hour visit to Pope Francis in Rome.

Air Force One then travels to Sicily for a meeting of the G7 before Mr Trump flies back to Washington DC.

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Kaynak/Source: