
NATO DEFENCE MINISTERS TO REVIEW KOSOVO ROLE

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NATO defence ministers will this week review the alliance's activities in Kosovo, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday (Feb 12), amid unease about Pristina's decision to create its own army.

The announcement late last year that the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), a lightly-armed emergency force, would be transformed into a standing army had US backing but alarmed many European countries.

Stoltenberg said several NATO countries felt the move was "ill-timed" and so the alliance would reassess its work in Kosovo - though he said the KFOR peacekeeping mission would not be affected.

"What we will assess (are) the activities we have outside the KFOR mission, which is different kinds of capacity-building," Stoltenberg said.

"We have not made any decisions but we have made clear we will assess the level of NATO engagement because several allies have expressed they think it's ill-timed, the decision to transform the KSF into an army."

Kosovo, whose population is mostly ethnic Albanian, broke away from Belgrade after a bloody 1998-99 guerrilla campaign and the NATO bombing of Serbian targets.

Serbia refuses to recognise its independence and EU-led efforts to improve ties have stalled. Kosovo has slapped 100 per cent tariffs on Serbian goods and has resisted pressure from Brussels and Washington to drop the measure.

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