
FRENCH DEFENCE MINISTER: 'IT'S CALLED ARTICLE 5, NOT ARTICLE F-35'

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□□□□□ Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly said on Monday (18 March) that Europe was concerned about the United States long-term commitment to NATO and implicitly criticised US President Donald Trump's approach toward the military alliance.

What Europeans are worried about is this: will the US commitment be perennial?, Parly said during an event in Washington, before she was set to meet with her American counterpart Patrick Shanahan at the Pentagon to discuss issues including Syria.

With Washington increasingly focused on the strategic challenge from China, Florence Parly said, a question mark has emerged over the transatlantic alliance.

Those posing the question would not be reassured, she said, by the current atmosphere of withdrawal: withdrawal from battlefields, from treaties, from trade pacts.

The Alliance should be unconditional, otherwise it is not an alliance. NATO's solidarity clause is called Article 5, not article F-35, Parly added, in a reference to the Lockheed-Martin F-35 jet fighter. She did not mention Trump specifically, but Washington has been a strong proponent of military products made by US defence companies and has repeatedly advised allies to buy American.

European countries buying more and more American fighter planes

All of Europe finds American fighter planes attractive, with first Slovakia and Romania and soon Bulgaria and Croatia opting to purchase these machines. EURACTIV France reports. The author, Nicolas Gros-Verheyde, is chief editor of Bruxelles2.eu website, dedicated to EU defence policy.

According to Parly, therefore a push toward greater European autonomy should not be seen as a move against the United States and should not lead to Washington being less engaged in the region.

Trump lashed out at French President Emmanuel Macron in November, saying it was very insulting for him to suggest Europe should create its own army to protect itself from potential adversaries.