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'Nonsense': Norway PM lashes out at NATO spending goals

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*"If I am allowed to speak, I think the percentage goal is nonsense," she said in an interview with the Norwegian Armed Forces' Forum Magazine, as cited by the Local. "The aim of the NATO countries must be the greatest possible defense capability, not a percentage goal in itself," she added.*

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Solberg added that while meeting the two percent target maybe easier for countries enjoying strong economic growth, it would be harder for those within the alliance whose economies are shrinking.

Norway's Defense Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide said in April that for Oslo to spend 2 percent of its GDP on defense would be *"very challenging"* in the short term. The Scandinavian country has already said it will increase its spending this year, but this will only bring it to around 1.6 percent and short of the target that was set at the NATO summit in Cardiff, the United Kingdom, last year.

NATO's General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, who was also Solberg's predecessor as Norway's PM, said that the country could easily meet the target.

*"If there is a political will, there is economic space. But it must be given priority,"* he said in a visit to Norway in June. *"Compared with other major initiatives we have implemented in Norway, reaching two percent is quite possible."*

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Aside from the United States, traditional NATO allies have found meeting the target a taxing affair. Germany allocates 1.2 percent of its GDP, the Netherlands 1.3 percent and Spain less than 1 percent. France is the only Western European country that is boosting defense spending. However, some Eastern European nations are increasing their military expenses citing what they call Russian aggression. Lithuania, for instance, wants to allocate twice as much on defense as it did last year.

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