

Russia's top five myths about NATO

Myth 1: NATO is preparing an attack on Russia

NATO is a defensive alliance, whose purpose is to protect our member states. Our exercises and military deployments are not directed against Russia – or any other country. Any claims that NATO is preparing an attack on Russia are absurd.

We announce our military exercises well in advance and they are subject to international observation. We notify Russia throughout the year about our exercises. In 2016, for example, Russian military experts visited 13 Allied exercises. This demonstrates the transparency of our military activities.

In direct response to Russia's use of military force against its neighbours, NATO is deploying four multinational battlegroups to the Baltic States and Poland. These forces are rotational, defensive and proportionate. They cannot compare to the three divisions Russia has established in its Western Military and Southern Military Districts. Before Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, there were no plans to deploy Allied troops to the eastern part of the Alliance. Our aim is to prevent conflict, protect our Allies, and preserve the peace.

NATO remains open to meaningful dialogue with Russia. That is why we held three meetings of the NATO-Russia Council last year, and our first meeting of 2017 in March. Talking to Russia allows us to communicate clearly our positions. The crisis in and around Ukraine remains the first topic on our agenda. We will continue our dialogue, including with representatives of Russian civil society.



Russian observers visit NATO Trident Juncture 2015 exercise.

Myth 2: NATO enlargement threatens Russia

Every country that joins NATO undertakes to uphold its principles and policies. This includes the commitment that “the Alliance does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia,” as [reaffirmed](#) at the Warsaw Summit. NATO enlargement is not directed against Russia.

Every sovereign nation has the right to choose its own security arrangements. This is a fundamental principle of European security, one that Russia has also subscribed to and should respect. NATO's Open Door policy has been a historic success. Together with EU enlargement, it has spread stability and prosperity in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Myth 3: NATO refuses real dialogue with Russia

NATO suspended practical cooperation with Russia due to its aggressive actions in Ukraine. However, we continue to keep channels for political dialogue open. The NATO-Russia Council, an important platform for dialogue, has never been suspended. In 2016, we held three meetings. We discussed the situation in and around Ukraine, as well as transparency and risk reduction. This included briefings on air safety and military exercises.

In March of this year, we took a positive step forward with an exchange on our respective military postures. This dialogue contributes to the predictability of our relations. We would welcome more briefings and transparency, particularly on upcoming military exercises, including ZAPAD 2017.

NATO also has military lines of communication with Russia. In March, the Chairman of the Military Committee, General Petr Pavel, talked by phone with the Russian Chief of Defence General Valery Gerasimov. This was a positive step in ensuring we retain effective and reliable military lines of communication.

Myth 4: By suspending practical cooperation with Russia, NATO undermines security

In 2014, NATO suspended all practical cooperation with Russia, in response to its aggressive actions in Ukraine. This cooperation included projects in Afghanistan, on counter-terrorism and scientific cooperation. These projects did deliver results over time, but their suspension has not undermined the security of the Alliance or our ability to counter challenges such as terrorism.

We have made it clear that we continue to seek a constructive relationship with Russia. But an improvement in the Alliance's relations with Russia will be contingent on a clear and constructive change in Russia's actions – one that demonstrates compliance with international law and Russia's international commitments.

Myth 5: NATO missile defence violates the INF Treaty

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) is a crucial element of Euro-Atlantic security. The United States, as a co-signatory, has made clear that the Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland are fully compliant with the INF treaty.

The Aegis Ashore system is purely defensive. Its SM-3 interceptors cannot be used for offensive purposes.

The bilateral agreements between the US and the two host nations, Romania and Poland, do not allow the sites to be used for any purpose other than missile defence.

NATO's missile defence is strictly defensive and designed to protect European Allies against missile threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. It is not directed against Russia and in no way undermines Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities.

We have made this clear to Russian authorities many times and at the highest political levels. Russia has declined our many offers to cooperate on missile defence. In fact, Russia terminated this cooperative dialogue unilaterally in 2013.

For more information, please visit our 'NATO-Russia Setting the Record Straight' portal on the NATO website:

<http://goo.gl/GvTesc>

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