

NATO Crisis Simulation
ADVANCE BACKGROUND PACKAGE

Major Defense Industry Facilities in the Baltic States



BACKGROUND:

Ukraine

In February 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and increased its active military presence in eastern Ukraine in support of Ukrainian separatists. Ukraine is not a member of NATO and therefore does not formally benefit from the “attack on one is an attack on all” assurance in Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, even though Ukraine did receive assurances for its territorial integrity from Russia, the U.S., and the UK in the 1994 Budapest Declaration.

In response to Russia’s actions, NATO condemned the annexation of Crimea. While NATO did not agree to provide ‘lethal military assistance’ to Ukraine—Poland did, but key Allies, including the U.S. and Germany, did not—NATO has offered training and financial support as well as non-lethal military aid. (President Trump since indicated that the U.S. would provide anti-tank missiles, but those munitions have not yet materialized.)

In June 2014, President Obama announced the European Reassurance Initiative, designed to reassure NATO Member states that the U.S. would come to their defense, even as NATO declined to take military action in support of Ukraine. This included deployment of two Armored Brigade Combat Teams (ABCTs) rotating among the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) as well as Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. Units would be focused on building allied defense capabilities through training and exercises. At the NATO Defense Ministerial meeting in October 2016, then-Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that the U.S. would deploy an additional Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT)’s worth of equipment, to be prepositioned in Germany and Poland. Despite President Trump’s rhetoric about NATO being “obsolete,” the Trump Administration—with strong support from the U.S. Congress—has not reduced that commitment.

NATO has formally deferred to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) “Minsk Protocol,” in which Russia, Ukraine, France, and Germany (but not the U.S.) participated. Since early 2015, the Minsk Protocol has sought to manage a cease-fire and limit force deployments, while encouraging a political settlement, which depends mostly on the government in Kiev. Since then, the conflict has remained relatively “frozen,” and there has been little political progress.

Russia

Since the Ukraine crisis began, Russian military forces have also been more provocative, launching renewed air and maritime patrols with incursions into NATO countries’ airspace and waters and aggressive military actions that could easily lead to accidents, miscalculation, and war. Russia’s President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly warned NATO against the introduction of additional NATO forces are “provocations” and claimed that NATO was violating the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act in which NATO assured the Russians that it had “no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons” in any of the new NATO member states, and that NATO intended to fulfill its collective defense responsibilities without “additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces” in the new member states.



In February 2018, Russia introduced its new S-400 Iskander nuclear-capable short range (500 km) ballistic missiles into Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania, citing NATO's growing "assertiveness."

In March 2019, President Trump formally announced U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, citing Russian non-compliance with the Treaty. President Putin likewise withdrew from the Treaty. Each country has threatened to deploy new weapons designed to deter the other.

Baltic States

Within Estonia and Latvia, Russian-speaking minorities comprise over 30 percent of the population, with heavier concentrations in the capitals and other urban areas. Since these states broke away from the Soviet Union in 1991, ethnic Russians living in those countries were typically not integrated as citizens unless they could pass a citizenship test in the local language—a policy currently under review. (In Lithuania, where the Russian population is only about 5 percent, Russian-speaking residents were allowed to be citizens after independence.) This citizenship issue has remained a sore point in Estonia and Latvia, with occasional protests, and a point that the Kremlin—which has vowed to protect the interests of all Russians, wherever they lived—continues to stress in Russian language media beamed into the countries.

United States

Concerning the broader US relationship with NATO on the occasion of NATO's 70th anniversary in April 2019, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg received a warm bipartisan welcome during an unprecedented appearance before a joint session of the U.S. Congress, in which he offered a stern warning about aggressive Russian behavior in Europe and made a strong plea for Alliance unity and the indispensability of the U.S. transatlantic security bond. Stoltenberg's speech before Congress came a day after a more tense meeting with President Trump, who took the occasion to criticize Germany and insist he had a favorable relationship with Vladimir Putin. During the visit, NATO also announced that it would fund construction of a weapons storage facility at an airbase in central Poland, which Stoltenberg said would "underpin the increased U.S. presence in Poland."

THE SITUATION:

It is now September 2019. NATO's strategic situation remains threatened along various fronts.

Ukraine

Despite evidence that sanctions have adversely affected the Russian economy, President Putin continues to support separatist activities and military operations in Eastern Ukraine. Reports indicate that additional troops, with tanks and other armored vehicles, have crossed into the contested area again.

Within Crimea, deteriorating economic conditions and persistent attacks on utility and supply lines into Crimea from Ukraine have led to protests against Moscow for having "failed" to achieve the gilded expectations of annexation. Western analysts suspect that the Kremlin's aim is to seize more territory to create a land corridor into Crimea to facilitate support for that enclave.

There are sporadic violations of the Minsk cease-fire agreement, but there continues to be no progress in negotiations. Under President Poroshenko, there had been some meager efforts to reach a political accommodation with Ukrainian separatists, but with continuing—and increasing—

Russian support, the separatists have no reason to reach a compromise settlement with Kiev. Recently elected to be Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelensky enjoys strong popular support but has not yet signaled a clear policy on how to deal with eastern Ukraine and Russia. Next month's parliamentary elections (in October 2019) will clarify how much freedom of action he has.

Russia

With growing anger in the U.S. regarding Russia's interference in the 2016 elections, Russia has taken an increasingly hard line, citing a growing threat from the U.S. to start a war. Claiming its determination to deter NATO aggression, Russia held a major exercise last month on Russian soil east of the Baltic States, and has left most of its forces in place, within 100 kilometers of the border.

Russia has also stepped up naval patrols in the Baltic and Black Seas and increased the number of patrols by its strategic bombers and reconnaissance aircraft. Increased air and naval activity close to the sovereign air and sea-space of many NATO Allies has been accompanied by harassment of NATO air and sea patrols. Russian military aircraft have also stepped up flight of military aircraft near NATO borders without using "identification-friend-or-foe" (IFF) codes or filing flight plans.

In Kaliningrad, a local group announced that it had sent a letter to President Putin to create a "land bridge" to Russia so that Kaliningrad would not feel threatened by what it argued was an unusually aggressive and militaristic NATO posture.

Baltic & Central European States

Public opinion in all three Baltic States is increasingly nervous about Russian intentions. Anti-Russian sentiment has been building in Estonia and Latvia, which has spilled over into occasional harassment of Russian speakers in those countries, many of whom have yet to qualify for citizenship. In response, there have been increasing public protests throughout both countries, mostly by Russian speakers in those countries but also including additional individuals unknown to local residents.

All three Baltic States have increased draft conscription and established mandatory "resistance training" for all men between the ages of 18 and 55. Police and homeland security forces have been reinforced and more heavily armed.

In Poland, the government has continued to lobby Washington to establish a permanent military base in the country, including the possibility of storing nuclear weapons there. Russia, for its part, has warned that such moves would constitute a gross violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and indicated such actions would be "directly counter to Russia's vital national security interests."

THIS WEEK'S DEVELOPMENTS

Peaceful protests by ethnic Russians in both Riga and Tallinn turned violent as the ranks of protesters swelled in the afternoon. Some protesters set fire to shops and municipal buildings, and a small number of police in both capitals were shot by protesters. Police reacted with a heavy show of force and began to arrest protesters, and a dozen protesters in each capital were killed during the melee.



The Kremlin issued strong statements reminding the governments of Estonia and Latvia—and its NATO and European Union Allies—that Russia could not stand by and watch ethnic Russians persecuted and possibly killed in a neighboring country. Military forces participating in the Russian training exercise began to pivot toward the Estonian and Latvian borders, and Russian tactical fighters began to fly patrols along the border.

Meanwhile, law enforcement authorities in both Riga and Tallinn report that many of the protesters arrested in those cities were not Russian residents of those countries, but had been recruited and paid by Russian intelligence services to infiltrate the erstwhile peaceful protest.

Separately, the Estonian Internet Foundation issued a statement reporting that there were numerous disruptions of Internet service last night across the country. Targets of the attacks included government ministries, financial institutions, and the websites of organizations known to be anti-Russian. The government is consulting with NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence, established in Tallinn in 2008, following major cyber-attacks in 2007 for which the Estonian government formally accused the Kremlin. Targets of the attacks included government ministries, financial institutions, and the websites of organizations known to be anti-Russian.

This morning, the governments of both Estonia and Latvia—joined by Lithuania and Poland—issued an urgent request to NATO for military reinforcements to be sent immediately to Estonia and Latvia to deter what they said was an increasing possibility of Russian military intervention.

Next Steps

NATO'S North Atlantic Council (NAC) will meet in Brno, CZ, on Thursday, 9 May, to review the strategic situation and decide on specific actions to address the growing crisis. NATO Foreign and Defense Ministers will attend. The **North Atlantic Council (NAC)** is the supreme political decision-making body of NATO and is presided over by the Secretary General. If appropriate, the NAC will provide specific political guidance to the NATO Military Committee for possible military actions.

In advance of that meeting, the Secretary General has asked for a set of recommendations for political and/or military action to which Allies would agree, so that contingency preparations can be made.

To that end, NATO Ambassadors agreed today on the following objectives to guide any actions on which NATO may decide at its Ministerial meeting on 9 May:

1. NATO should be prepared to fulfill all commitments to its Members, including Article 5.
2. NATO should be prepared to fulfill all commitments made to Partners, especially Ukraine.
3. NATO should take steps to continually reassure all allies of NATO's commitment;
4. NATO should take steps to deter Russia from escalating further the crisis in Ukraine and from taking aggressive military actions that could lead to miscalculation and war.
5. NATO should consider steps to establish a substantive dialogue with Russia to enable a reduction of tensions.
6. NATO should NOT provoke escalation of any crisis through the Alliance's actions.

The Secretary General has asked EACH DELEGATION to come to the 9 May meeting with a clear statement of its goals with respect to this growing crisis.

EUROPE



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