The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

NATO Forces Should Act if Russia Invades Eastern Ukraine, Czech President Says

April 07, 2014



Milos Zeman during a presidential election debate organized by Czech Radio.

PRAGUE — The West should take strong action, possibly including sending NATO forces to Ukraine, if Russia tries to annex the eastern part of the country, Czech President Milos Zeman has said.

"The moment Russia decides to widen its territorial expansion to the eastern part of Ukraine, that is where the fun ends," Zeman said Sunday in a broadcast on Czech public radio.

"There I would plead not only for the strictest EU sanctions, but even for military readiness of the North Atlantic Alliance, like for example NATO forces entering Ukrainian territory," Zeman said.

Pro-Russian protesters seized state buildings in three east Ukrainian cities on Sunday, triggering accusations from the pro-European government in Kiev that President Vladimir

Putin was orchestrating "separatist disorder".

The Czech Republic has been a NATO member since 1999, joining just weeks before the alliance decided to bomb Yugoslavia, putting the newcomer and Zeman, its then prime minister, to the test.

In the Czech constitutional system it is the government that has the main say in foreign policy, although president is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The government resisted strong EU sanctions against Russia after its annexation of Crimea, with Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka pointing out the negative economic impact of such a step.

"Even for me — and I am no hawk — it would be a sort of red line to attempt to annex the eastern part of Ukraine," Zeman said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/07/nato-forces-should-act-if-russia-invades-eastern-ukraine-czech-president-says-a33685