

Foreign Ministry Accuses NATO of Using Ukraine as Excuse to Strengthen Alliance

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NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen looks on at the start of a NATO foreign ministers meeting at the Alliance headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

The Foreign Ministry has accused NATO of using the crisis in Ukraine to boost its appeal to members and justify its existence by rallying them against an imaginary threat.

The ministry said Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen's threat Russia would face consequences if it failed to pull back troops from the Ukrainian border were confrontational and that in recent months he had not offered "any constructive agenda" for Ukraine, adding that it was adding to instability in the region.

"The constant accusations against us by the secretary general convince us that the alliance is trying to use the crisis in Ukraine to rally its ranks in the face of an imaginary external threat to NATO members and to strengthen demand for the alliance ... in the 21st century," the ministry said.

NATO has suspended all practical military and civilian cooperation with Russia, although it said political dialogue could continue at ambassador level or higher, since Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea region last month.

The Western military alliance has also limited access for Russian diplomats to its headquarters and is reviewing a 1997 co-operation agreement and subsequent Rome declaration of 2002 that prevented it from setting up bases in eastern and central Europe.

Russia has responded by accusing NATO of having a Cold War mentality and has expressed concern over the possibility of deploying the alliance's troops in eastern Europe permanently.

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