The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Swedish Government Plans Higher Defense Spending Due to Russian Threat

April 22, 2014

STOCKHOLM — Sweden's government said Tuesday it would boost defense spending significantly over the next decade if re-elected, in response to a growing threat from Russia.

The center-right government, trailing in polls ahead of a national election in September, said it planned to gradually increase spending up to 2024, buying more fighter jets and submarines and boosting its military presence in the Baltic Sea.

"In the budget for 2015 we will propose a significant strengthening of the military," the leaders of the four parties in the Alliance government said in a signed article in daily Dagens Nyheter.

Sweden has been running down its military since the end of the Cold War, and the Alliance said it had been aware of an increasing threat from Russia since 2009.

"What we are seeing now is that Russia's actions confirm and exceed the fears we had then," it added in a clear reference to Ukraine, where Moscow's annexation of Crimea has triggered

the worst crisis in relations with the West since the fall of communism.

Just more than a year ago, Russian planes staged a mock attack on Sweden, prompting NATO to scramble planes from Lithuania because no Swedish jets were in a position to respond.

That put Sweden's dwindling military capability under the microscope, as did earlier comments from the Armed Forces chief that the country would not hold out a week against an invasion.

The Alliance said that, under its plan, the annual increase in spending would reach 5.5 billion Swedish crowns ($832 million) by 2024.

It said the increase would have to be paid for by savings in other areas, including higher fines for tax dodging, and lower spending on international peace operations, nuclear safety and environmental projects with Russia.

The government said it would increase its planned purchase of 60 fighter jets from defense company Saab to 70.

It would also buy two new submarines and refit three older ones. Saab recently said it would buy submarine production facilities in Sweden from Germany's ThyssenKrupp.

The leading opposition party, the Social Democrats, has called for more investment in Sweden's military capabilities.

A cornerstone of Finance Minister Anders Borg's fiscal plans has been to prioritize returning state finances to a surplus over coming years after operating an expansive policy during the downturn.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/22/swedish-government-plans-higher-defense-spending-due-to-russian-threat-a34482