

Russia Claims Exclusion From NATO Summit on Ukraine

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NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen waits before an interview with Reuters at the Alliance headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

Russian diplomats say they have been excluded from an upcoming summit of NATO member countries in Wales, Kommersant reported Monday, citing an unidentified diplomatic source.

The source noted that many of the themes to be discussed at the summit directly affect Russia, and that even "in the current circumstances in Moscow they were not counting on this," Kommersant reported.

The summit, to be held on Sept. 4-5, was initially expected to focus on terrorism and cybercrime, but will now largely revolve around the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the military alliance's increasingly frosty relations with Russia.

"NATO's summit meeting in Wales comes at a critical time in the alliance's history when the global security environment is becoming increasingly unpredictable and unstable — as Russia's actions in Ukraine have shown," the organization's press release on the summit read.

The themes to be discussed at the summit include "the readiness of the alliance to enforce collective defense," and "relations with Russia and stronger ties with Ukraine."

According to the summit's agenda, Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko will attend a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission on the first day of the summit.

Though NATO has not confirmed Russia's claim it hadn't been invited, the summit comes at a particularly sensitive time in relations between the two parties — with both sides having accused each other of aggressive actions since the conflict in Ukraine began with the ouster of Kremlin-backed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February.

NATO General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Friday condemned the entry of Russia's aid convoy into Ukraine without Kiev's consent accusing it of continuing to "deepen the crisis in the region, which Russia itself has created and has continued to fuel."

In August, U.S. Air Force General Philip Breedlove, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, said in an interview with German newspaper Die Welt that NATO member countries should not exclude the possibility of a Russian invasion.

Nations should be prepared for "little green men" invading, he said — a reference to soldiers, widely believed to be Russian, in unmarked uniforms who were present in Crimea before Russia annexed the peninsula in March.

Rasmussen on Friday reiterated that sentiment, saying the military build-up of Russian forces on the Ukraine border was "alarming," a statement published Friday on the NATO website said.

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