

Russia Slams NATO For Allowing 'Clerk' to Comment on Troops in Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 25, 2014



U.S. 173 airborne brigade soldiers leave a C-130 aircraft during the "Steadfast Javelin II" military exercise in the Lielvarde air base, Latvia.

Russia's Defense Ministry has slammed NATO for allowing a mere "clerk" to make statements on the supposed withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, adding the alliance's cleaners could start commenting next.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jay Janzen said Wednesday in e-mailed comments to Reuters that there had been "a significant pullback of Russian conventional forces from inside Ukraine," but that "many thousands are still deployed in the vicinity of the border."

The Russian Defense Ministry, which has consistently denied the presence of troops in eastern Ukraine, refuted the statement that same day, while also pointing out the rank of the spokesman who made the comments, calling him a "clerk."

"The 'official statement' was sent to the authoritative news agency Reuters as an ordinary e-mail," Defense Ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov scathingly said Wednesday, state-run RIA Novosti reported.

"It will be the employees of the cleaning companies that maintain NATO headquarters [who will next be making such claims], only this time in text-message format," Konashenkov said.

Konashenkov added that Janzen's statement showed the departure of former NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen had left staff clambering to make a name for themselves.

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