

Poland Wants NATO Response to Russia's Military Activity in Baltic

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Marines from Polish submarine ORP SEP take the mooring rope during NATO Submarine Rescue Exercise Dynamic Monarch on Gdansk Bay, near Hel in the Baltic Sea.

WARSAW — Poland expects the NATO alliance to step up its military exercises around the Baltic Sea after a flurry of activity by Russian warships and jet fighters in the area last month, Defense Minister Tomasz Siemoniak told Reuters in an interview.

"What happened in December was indeed rather unprecedented," Siemoniak said. "We will definitely want the Baltic Sea to be taken into account to a greater extent, and I think that in terms of military exercises planned by NATO, there will be such a reaction," he said. The interview was conducted on Monday but authorized for release by the ministry on Thursday.

The Atlantic alliance has already increased the frequency of air patrols in the region, part of a revival of Cold War tensions sparked by Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its

support for Ukraine's pro-Russian rebels.

Siemoniak said Moscow did not have an exit strategy, and that NATO and the European Union, which has imposed sanctions on Russia together with the United States, should brace themselves for years of conflict.

"We shouldn't talk about lifting the sanctions too soon," he said, adding that they were the most effective tool at the West's disposal.

The French government in November put on hold a contract to supply Mistral warships to Russia after coming under pressure from NATO allies.

Asked if French-based companies such as Airbus and Thales could suffer as they bid for contracts in Poland's \$41 billion army modernization program, Siemoniak said: "I'm counting on France's decision [not to deliver] being permanent, so the problem has been solved. It seems that Russia has also accepted that."

Siemoniak also denied that a U.S. Senate report, which in December made clear by implication that Poland had allowed the CIA to run secret detention facilities on its soil, had damaged the relationship between the two allies.

Polish officials have expressed disappointment that the published version of the report contained enough detail to implicate Poland, putting it at risk of reprisal attacks.

"I think that, at the moment, the cooperation between our intelligence agencies is the best in history," Siemoniak said, "so the publication of the report has not made it more difficult."

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