

Nordic Nations Agree: Russia Is Europe's Biggest Threat

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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People take part in celebrations for the first anniversary of the Crimean treaty signing in Sevastopol, March 18, 2015.

Calling Russia the biggest challenge to European security, Nordic nations agreed on closer defense ties and increased solidarity with the Baltic states on Thursday, aiming to increase regional security through deterrence. Writing in a joint declaration, the defense ministers of Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland said Northern Europe must prepare for possible crises or incidents because of Russia.

"Russia's leaders have shown that they are prepared to make practical and effective use of military means in order to reach their political goals, even when this involves violating principles of international law," the ministers wrote in a joint statement in daily Aftenposten.

"There is increasing military and intelligence activity in the Baltics and in our northern areas," the ministers said. "The Russian military is challenging us along our borders

and there have been several border infringements in the Baltics."

The statement comes amid heightened tensions in Europe since Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine a year ago. With large Russian minorities living in the Baltics, concerns have grown in the region about the risk of Russian intervention.

Finland, which borders Russia, and Sweden are not members of NATO but have increased cooperation with the trans-Atlantic alliance, and the joint declaration has been among their strongest responses to Russia's aggression.

"Russia's actions are the biggest challenge to the European security," the ministers said. "Russia's propaganda and political maneuvering are contributing to sowing discord between nations, and inside organizations like NATO and the EU."

The ministers said that closer cooperation in the Nordics and solidarity with the Baltic would improve security through deterrence as it would lift the threshold for military events.

The Norwegian defense ministry confirmed the statement's authenticity and said it would be published as an editorial in major newspapers in all Nordic countries in the coming days.

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