

Pentagon Head Calls Special Meeting to Deal With Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter speaks at a news conference at the Pentagon in Washington.

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter said on Thursday the situation with Russia had taken a "sad turn" and he was gathering U.S. military leaders and diplomats to assess the effectiveness of NATO strategy toward Moscow in response to the Ukraine crisis.

The gathering of two dozen U.S. military leaders and ambassadors based in Europe will take place on Friday in Stuttgart at the headquarters of U.S. European Command, which is responsible for U.S. forces in the region, U.S. defense officials said.

"We have something that has taken a sad turn recently, which is Russia," Carter told troops at U.S. Africa Command, which is also based in Stuttgart, in southern Germany. "We were absolutely hoping for something different, but it appears that (Russian President) Vladimir Putin is taking his country in a different direction."

"I don't think that's a good way for Russia and at some point the Russian people will wake up to that, but they are not showing much sign of that now," he added. "The situation here (in Europe) is not as rosy as it might have seemed in the past."

Carter said that's why he had traveled to Stuttgart, "to take another look at what we are doing here."

The session will gather U.S. military leaders and ambassadors based in Europe to discuss how effective Western sanctions and military actions have been in deterring Russia and reassuring NATO allies, U.S. defense officials said.

"This meeting is intended to inform the secretary's thinking as he heads into his first NATO ministerial in late June," said Brent Colburn, a Pentagon spokesman. "One of the areas of focus will be Russia's actions over the past 18 months, including their operations in Ukraine."

The Western allies have imposed asset freezes and travel bans on a number of Russians. The United States launched Operation Atlantic Resolve to step up military exercises with NATO members in eastern Europe. The United States approved \$1 billion to support efforts to reassure European allies.

"The primary purpose is to assess and strategize on how the United States and key allies should think about heightened tensions with Russia over the past year," said a U.S. defense official on Carter's plane to Stuttgart.

Asked if the session would discuss providing lethal weapons to Ukraine, the official said Carter was still open to the idea and the issue could come up. The United States so far has resisted providing lethal arms to avoid escalating the conflict.

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