

Estonia Calls for Permanent NATO Battalions as Protection From Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel (L) and German Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy, Sigmar Gabriel (R) pose together with Estonia's Prime Minister Taavi Roivas (C) in Berlin, Germany.

Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Roivas has called for one NATO battalion to be permanently stationed in each Baltic nation in an interview with the German newspaper Die Welt has, published Thursday.

The measure would help Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to protect themselves from Russia's expansionism, he said.

Roivas said that the troops could rotate, but that NATO needed to be a continuous presence. "There must not be any gaps. Deterrence has to be the new normalcy," he told Die Welt.

Roivas also said that although sanctions imposed on Russia over its role in the eastern Ukraine conflict may harm Europe's own interests, the European Union should keep them in

place.

“As long as Russia has annexed and occupied parts of Ukraine, we have no choice,” Roivas said. “Europe has sent a clear message: we do not tolerate military interventions in sovereign states.”

Speaking on the refugee crisis in Europe, the Estonian Prime Minister said that Russian actions in Syria were causing the situation to worsen.

“Bombing those parts of Aleppo where ISIS isn't even present cannot be helpful from a European point of view. Destroying hospitals and civil institutions in Syria drives more refugees to Europe,” he said.

Russia began airstrikes in Syria in September last year. In March, President Vladimir Putin announced the withdrawal of the majority of troops, but Russian servicemen continue to provide assistance to Syrian army.

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