

NATO to Increase Defence Spending Due to 'Russian Aggression'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

NATO's European states are to increase defense spending as a result of Russian aggression, the Financial Times reported Tuesday.

“We are faced with uncertainty, we are faced with more threats, more security challenges than in a generation, and we need unity, we need strength, we need stability,” said Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg. He also cited the current refugee crisis as a reason to boost spending.

The European NATO members spent a total of \$253 billion on defense in 2015, accounting for 1.7 percent of their total gross domestic product, the newspaper reported.

“2016 will be the first year with increased defense spending among European allies for many, many years,” said Stoltenberg.

The biggest increase in military spending has been made in the Baltic nations. Latvia's defense budget will rise 60 percent in 2016, with Lithuania also spending 35 percent more on defense. Estonia is to boost its military budget by nine percent, the Financial Times reported.

NATO has perceived a growing threat from Russia since Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and from its actions in eastern Ukraine.

Earlier this month, Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Roivas called for one NATO battalion to be permanently stationed in each Baltic nation in order to protect them from Russian expansionism, German newspaper Die Welt reported.

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