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Russia Warns Retaliation if Bosnia Joins NATO

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Moscow has been keen to prevent NATO's expansion into the Balkan states. **NATO / Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)**

Russia will retaliate if Bosnia and Herzegovina follows through with its proclaimed intent to join NATO, Moscow's Embassy in Sarajevo said Thursday.

Bosnia's tripartite presidency is split between its Croat and Bosniak members who advocate integration into the U.S.-led military alliance and its pro-Russian Serb member who favors neutrality.

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"In the event of practical rapprochement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO, our country will be forced to react to this hostile act," Russia's embassy said in a Facebook post.

"No new round of the alliance's expansion has improved Russia's relations with new NATO

disciples," the embassy added.

The embassy also stressed that NATO's main purpose "is to fight Russia, and joining it will force Sarajevo to take a side in this military-political confrontation."

NATO, which was created during the Cold War to provide collective security against the Soviet Union, suspended relations with Russia in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

Moscow has been keen to prevent NATO's expansion into the Balkan states, playing up its shared cultural and historical ties with the region and seeking to bolster its commercial presence there. With North Macedonia joining the alliance last year, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are now the only remaining Western Balkan countries outside NATO.

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