The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Wants NATO to Ditch Plans for Ukraine and Georgia Membership

By AFP

December 10, 2021



The military alliance has previously welcomed the idea of membership for Ukraine and Georgia. **NATO / Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)**

Russia said Friday NATO should formally scrap a 2008 decision to open its door to Georgia and Ukraine, insisting that giving Moscow guarantees on halting the bloc's eastward expansion was in the West's "fundamental" interests.

The foreign ministry also demanded that NATO stop conducting military exercises close to Russia's borders and added that this and other security proposals would be unveiled "in the near future."

Earlier this week Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. leader Joe Biden held two hours of talks, with the Kremlin chief demanding that the West put in writing guarantees that Ukraine would not become a NATO launchpad.

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In the past few weeks Russia moved around 100,000 troops to Ukraine's border. Putin did not say whether Moscow planned to go on the attack but insisted the country has a right to defend its security.

On Friday, the Russian foreign ministry said the United States should formally close the door both to Ukraine and Georgia, which were promised in 2008 they would become members one day.

"In the fundamental interests of European security, it is necessary to officially disavow the decision of the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit that 'Ukraine and Georgia will become NATO members,'" the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

By supporting Ukraine and Georgia's aspirations, NATO is violating the basic principle of all OSCE participating states to "not strengthen their security at the expense of the security" of other states, Moscow said.

The military bloc should also guarantee that weapons threatening Russia's security will not be deployed on the country's western borders — by either NATO members or other countries, the ministry said.

Moscow also said it wanted to receive a "concrete" reaction from NATO regarding a number of earlier proposals, including a demand to move military exercises away from the "contact line" between NATO and Russian forces.

It added that "regular dialogue" between defence officials of Russia, the United States and NATO should resume.

Ukraine is nowhere near entering NATO, but the United States helps train Ukrainian forces and has committed more than $2.5 billion to bolster a military that crumpled in the face of the Russian assault back in 2014.

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