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Russia Accuses NATO of Ignoring De-Escalation Proposals

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The Foreign Ministry building in Moscow. **kazac-maksim / pixabay**

NATO has left unanswered Russia's offer to de-escalate soaring tensions, a senior Russian diplomat said Friday as Moscow and the U.S.-led alliance trade accusations of threatening military moves.

Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko's comments follow NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's offer of "meaningful dialogue" with Moscow in exchange for "aggressor" Russia standing down troops near Ukraine.

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"We haven't received any concrete serious proposals from NATO. All our previously made proposals on de-escalation remained unanswered," Grushko said in comments to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Russia's Foreign Ministry this week handed a list of security demands to visiting U.S. Assistant State Secretary Karen Donfried, who then traveled to NATO headquarters in Brussels to discuss them with Stoltenberg.

President Vladimir Putin this week requested to "immediately launch negotiations" with the U.S. and NATO. Putin seeks international legal guarantees for Russia's security before he withdraws his troops, which the U.S. warns signals Russia's imminent invasion of Ukraine.

Grushko's colleague Sergei Ryabkov previously warned that Russia could act militarily if the talks it demands with the U.S. and NATO do not materialize.

Stoltenberg also stressed during a joint press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy that NATO would not yield to Russia's demands to prevent Ukraine's efforts to join NATO and the bloc's right to defend its allies.

The U.S. and the European Union threatened "massive" sanctions against Moscow in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Putin denies planning an invasion and instead blames NATO for the rise in tensions, including through U.S.-led military exercises in the Black Sea.

In addition to closing Ukraine's door to NATO membership, the Russian president demands that the Western military alliance halt weapons deployment on its western border.

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