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Russia Warns of 'Countermeasures' to Finland's NATO Membership

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Statements by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Finland, Sanna Marin. **NATO / flickr**

Russia warned Tuesday that it will take military and other steps to respond to its neighbor Finland joining NATO after decades of non-alignment.

Finland became the 31st member of the U.S.-led military alliance after a historic strategic shift, and one of the fastest membership processes in NATO's recent history, triggered by Russia's invasion of its other western neighbor, Ukraine.

"Naturally, this forces us to take countermeasures to ensure our own tactical and strategic security," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a daily briefing.

Peskov described Helsinki's new military alignment as an "escalation" and an "encroachment on Russia's security and national interests."

In separate comments, the Russian Foreign Ministry reiterated its threat to take "military,

technical and other retaliatory measures" in response to the perceived threat as the NATO-Russia border doubled in size with Finland's membership.

It vowed to take "concrete defense-building steps" taking into account whether NATO infrastructure and attack weapons would be deployed within Finland.

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"As a result of NATO's direct contact line with the Russian borders more than doubling, the situation in the Northern European region — previously one of the most stable in the world — has changed dramatically," Russia's Foreign Ministry said.

Joining NATO places Finland under the alliance's Article Five, the collective defense pledge that an attack on one member "shall be considered an attack against them all."

Finland, which has a 1,300-kilometer border with Russia, brings a potent military into the alliance with a wartime strength of 280,000 and one of Europe's largest artillery arsenals.

Its strategic location bolsters NATO's defenses on a border running from the vulnerable Baltic states to the increasingly competitive Arctic.

Welcoming Finland as a new member, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg invoked President Vladimir Putin's goals for invading Ukraine last year:

"He wanted less NATO along his borders [...] He's getting exactly the opposite."

AFP contributed reporting.

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