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Russia Says Ramping Up Border Defense as Finland Enters NATO

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NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö. **NATO / Flickr**

Russia has stepped up the defense of its northwestern borders following its neighbor Finland's entry into NATO, the commander of the Russian military air defense and missile defense forces said in an interview published Monday.

"Under these conditions, air defense troops are practicing the protection of the state border in the northwest in accordance with the increased threat level," Andrei Demin, deputy commander of the Russian Aerospace Forces, told the Defense Ministry-run newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star).

Related article: Russia Warns of 'Countermeasures' to Finland's NATO Membership

Finland became the 31st member of the U.S.-led military alliance last week after Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered a historic strategic shift in the previously non-aligned Nordic country.

The Kremlin warned it would take “countermeasures to ensure our own tactical and strategic security,” describing Helsinki’s entry into the bloc as an “escalation” and an “encroachment on Russia’s security and national interests.”

Joining NATO places Finland, which shares a 1,300-kilometer border with Russia, under the alliance's collective defense pledge known as Article Five.

Sweden, which like Finland abandoned decades of military non-alignment after Russia sent troops into Ukraine, remains blocked from NATO as members Turkey and Hungary refuse to ratify Stockholm’s bid on a litany of disputes.

The Kremlin has threatened to take “countermeasures” in response to what it described as an escalation and an encroachment on Russia’s national security.

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