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Finnish Parliament Votes to Ban Russians From Buying Property

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Finnish Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen. **U.S. Secretary of Defense**

Finland's parliament voted unanimously in favor of a proposed ban on Russians from buying property and exerting "hostile influence" on the country, the Finnish Defense Ministry said Friday.

Finland, which shares the EU and NATO's longest border with Russia, has blocked several real estate purchases by Russian nationals and companies over the past year, citing national security risks.

"This decision sends a clear message: we will not allow Finland to be undermined," Finnish Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said in a statement.

The ban would not apply to Russians or other foreigners with a Finnish permanent residence permit or an EU residence permit granted by Helsinki, allowing them to seek approval from Finland's Defense Ministry for transactions.

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The exact language of the newly passed law bars individuals and companies from countries that "wage a war of aggression and pose a potential threat to Finland's national security" from carrying out real estate transactions.

Hakkanen said the government will now draft a decree identifying the countries that are subject to the ban and will introduce legislation on ex post facto intervention and control of foreign-bought property.

The new ban also includes provisions for a permit requirement that would prevent circumventions through so-called dummy purchases, where someone buys property on behalf of another to conceal the true buyer's identity.

In 2013, Hakkanen appointed a working group to assess the real estate purchase ban for Russian citizens, with the Defense Ministry saying such property could be used against the Finnish economy, infrastructure, businesses and security.

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