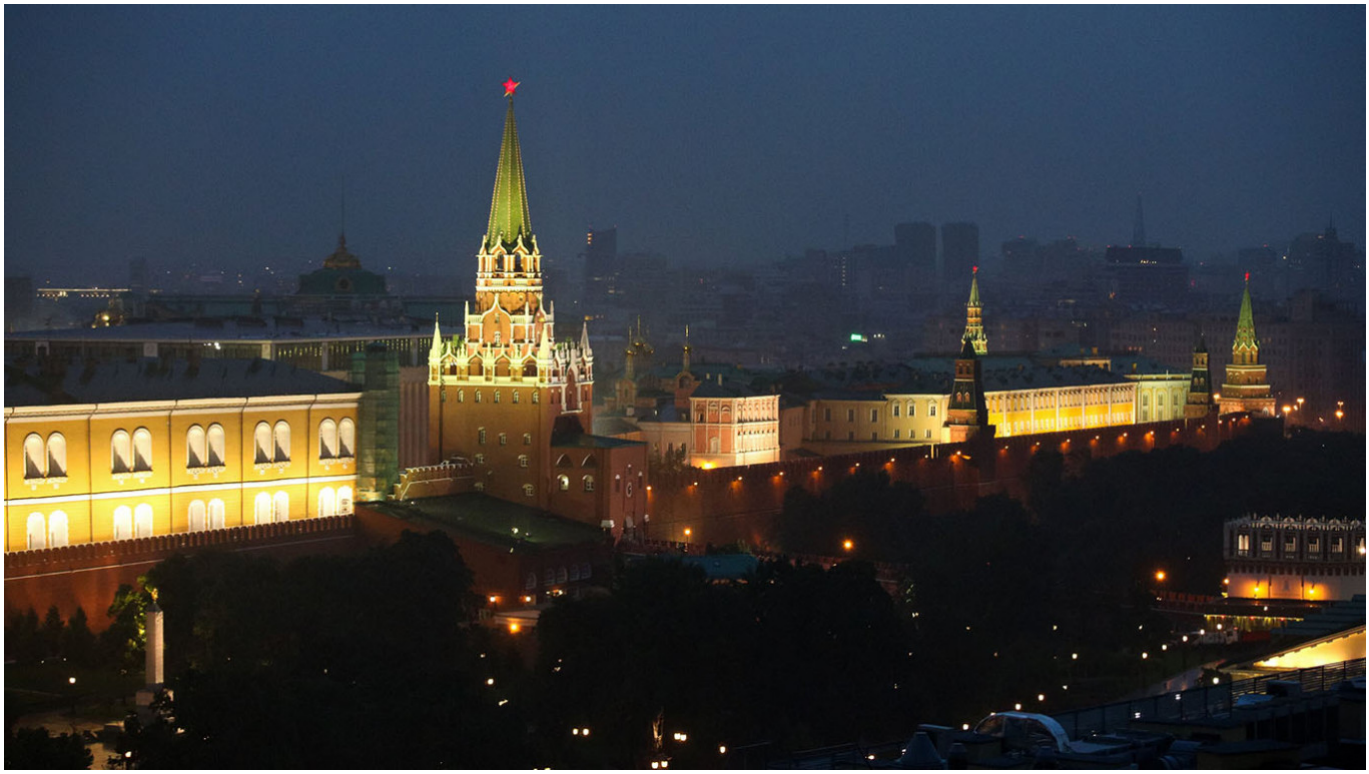
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Finland's Move to Host Nuclear Weapons Will Backfire, Kremlin Warns

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Finland's plans to allow nuclear weapons on its territory would force Russia to take countermeasures, the Kremlin warned Friday, casting the proposal as a new threat on its border.

Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Helsinki's willingness to align with French and German proposals to strengthen NATO and Europe's nuclear deterrence "leads to an escalation of tensions on the European continent."

"These statements create vulnerabilities for Finland, vulnerabilities provoked by actions of the Finnish authorities," Peskov told reporters during a daily briefing.

"By placing nuclear weapons on its territory, Finland will begin to pose a threat to us. And if Finland threatens us, we will take appropriate measures," he added.

Finnish Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said Thursday that plans to lift restrictions

prohibiting nuclear weapons on its soil would bring the new NATO member in line with the Western military alliance's deterrence policy.

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Finland dropped decades of military non-alignment when it joined NATO in April 2023, more than a year after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Hakkanen said the war has "significantly deteriorated" the security situation in Finland and across Europe.

Finland's proposed nuclear policy change would require amendments to its 1987 Nuclear Energy Act and the criminal code.

Hakkanen said transporting, delivering or possessing a nuclear weapon in Finland should be allowed for defense purposes.

Finland's right-wing coalition, which holds a majority in parliament, said a vote on its proposal to change the country's nuclear policy is expected in early April. If adopted, it said it hoped the new policy could enter into force as soon as possible.

Neighboring Sweden, Denmark and Norway do not have similar legislative bans for wartime but have long maintained policies of not allowing nuclear weapons on their territory in peacetime.

Finland shares a 1,340 kilometer (833 mile) border with Russia.

AFP contributed reporting.

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