

Russia's top five myths about NATO

Myth 1: NATO outlived its purpose after the Cold War.

For decades, NATO has helped to preserve and create stability in Europe. The end of the Cold War marked a new period of optimism and hope in Europe. The Soviet Union collapsed, former adversaries joined NATO and the EU, and Russia became a partner. NATO's mission evolved. The Alliance maintained its collective defence, but also stepped up to manage conflicts beyond our territory, with missions in the Balkans and, following 9/11, in Afghanistan.

Today, the world is more dangerous than it has been for many decades. To the east, we see an assertive Russia, violating sovereign borders. To the south, we see turmoil across the Middle East and North Africa. NATO Allies also face other threats, including acts of terrorism in our own streets. NATO's commitment to defend each Ally is as important today as ever before. The challenges we face are such that no nation can tackle them alone. For many partners, that's a reason to seek NATO membership. For sixty-seven years, NATO has bound the U.S., Canada, and European Allies together, an anchor for world security and the ultimate insurance policy.

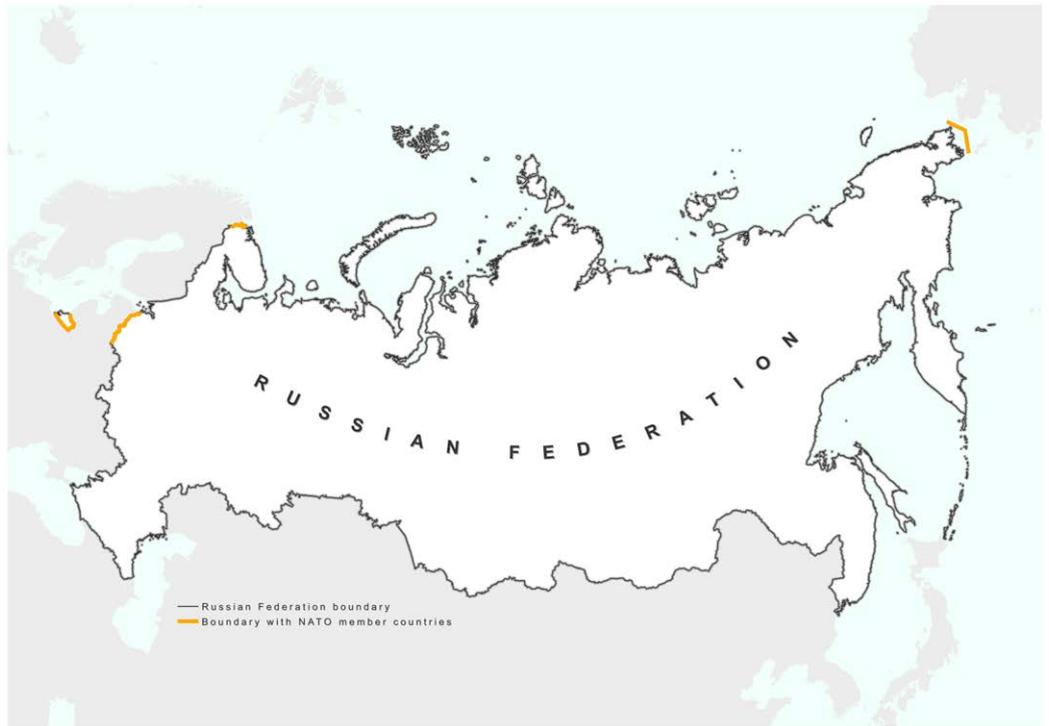
Myth 2: NATO is encircling Russia.

This myth ignores geography. Russia's land border is just over 20,000 kilometres long. Of that, less than one-sixteenth (1,215 kilometres), is with NATO members. Russia shares land borders with 14 countries. Only five of them are NATO members.

Outside NATO territory, the Alliance only has a military presence in three places: Kosovo, Afghanistan and off the Horn of Africa. All three operations are carried out with a United Nations mandate, and therefore carry the approval of Russia, along with all other Security Council members. In contrast, Russia has military bases and soldiers in three countries – Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – without the consent of their governments.

In fact, we've seen new permanent deployments all along Russia's western border with NATO Allies, from the Barents to the Baltic Sea, and from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. There are currently an estimated 300,000 troops based in Russia's Western Military District alone.

Since the end of the Cold War, Allies have significantly reduced the size of their armed forces. In 1997, the number of Allied forces stationed in other NATO countries was around 100,000. Next year that number will be fewer than 75,000.



Myth 3: NATO has violated the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

When NATO Allies recently agreed to deploy four battalions to the east of our Alliance, they also agreed that the battalions would be rotational, and well below any reasonable definition of "substantial combat forces." Russia, which pledged to exercise "similar restraint" has increased the numbers of its troops along Allied borders, and breached agreements which allow for verification and military transparency, in particular on military exercises. NATO has respected its commitments faithfully. Russia has not.

By signing the NATO-Russia Founding Act, Russia pledged not to threaten or use force against NATO Allies and any other state. It has broken this commitment, with the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, the territory of a sovereign state. Russia also continues to support militants in eastern Ukraine.

The full text of the NATO-Russia Founding Act is available on our website: <http://bit.ly/1JYSTOF>

Myth 4: NATO missile defence targets Russia.

NATO's missile defence system is not directed against Russia. Geography and physics make it impossible for the NATO system to shoot down Russian intercontinental missiles. Their capabilities are too limited, their planned numbers too few and their locations too far south to do so.

Some claim that the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme removes the need for NATO missile defence. But there are two reasons why this argument is false: 1) The Iran agreement does not cover the proliferation of ballistic missile technology; 2) NATO's missile defence is not about any one country, but about the proliferation threat more generally. A growing number of countries have obtained, or are trying to obtain, ballistic missile technology, and NATO will fulfil its responsibility to defend its citizens.

Myth 5: NATO is preparing for war with Russia.

NATO is a defensive alliance, whose purpose is to protect our member states. The Alliance does not seek confrontation with Russia. For almost a quarter of a century, Allies have worked to establish a partnership with Russia.

We announce our military exercises well in advance and they are subject to international observation. NATO's plans for more forces in the Baltic States and Poland are a response to a changed security environment. Before Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, NATO had no plans to deploy Allied troops to the eastern part of the Alliance.

In the current security context, NATO will continue to focus on deterrence and defence, while remaining open to a periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue with Russia. That is why two meetings of the NATO-Russia Council were held this year – to avoid misunderstandings, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability. Talking to Russia allows us to communicate clearly our positions, with the crisis in and around Ukraine being the first topic on our agenda. While practical cooperation remains suspended, we will continue our dialogue with Russia, including with representatives of Russian civil society.



Russian observers visit NATO Trident Juncture 2015 exercise.

For more information, please visit our 'NATO-Russia Setting the Record Straight' portal on the NATO website: <http://goo.gl/GvTesc>

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