

Anti-NATO Protests in Sweden as the Country Hosts Large International Exercise

Protesters across 17 cities in Sweden, including Stockholm, voice opposition to the international military exercise hosted by their country.

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Nationwide protests took place in Sweden to reject the country's decision to host a large international military exercise - dubbed Aurora 2023 - and its aspirations to join NATO, China Daily reported on Sunday.

"NATO is nothing but the war machine of the United States," Nellie Puig, a Swede protesting his country's potential accession to the military coalition, told the newspaper.

"It is not a defensive alliance as they claim. It is an organization that runs the errands of the United States," he added.

A number of organizations, political parties, and NGOs took part in the demonstrations, including the Arbitration Society, the Swedish Peace, No NATO, and No to Nuclear Weapons, the news outlet said.

Sweden's capital Stockholm alone saw hundreds of anti-NATO protesters in its streets.

The demonstrators held banners saying: "No to NATO," "NATO's war will get our children killed for a dollar," and "Stop Aurora 23," as they marched the streets of the capital.

"Aurora 23 and similar previous exercises prove that Sweden has become increasingly integrated with NATO and Sweden also sells arms to NATO," said Puig.

Earlier this month, [Sweden launched Aurora-23](#), the largest military drill the country has witnessed in 25 years, involving 14 countries and around 26,000 servicemembers.

Members from the US, UK, Germany, France, Ukraine, Finland, Poland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, and Austria will take part in the training that ends on May 11.

“The purpose of Aurora 23 is to enhance the Swedish Armed Forces’ collected capability to counter an armed attack on Sweden, and also to exercise the entire chain of raised readiness to mobilisation to receive a third party for HNS, as well as a way to prepare us to be a member of Nato,” said Lieutenant Colonel Henrik Larsson, the planning director of the drills.

Last February, Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonson said Stockholm aims to further [integrate its military relations with NATO](#) as the country’s accession into the coalition is facing obstacles after talks with Turkey have been put to a halt.

Last year, the start of the Ukraine war prompted Sweden and its neighbor Finland to drop decades of military non-alignment. Finland became the [31st member of NATO](#) earlier this month, while Stockholm’s provocative actions toward Ankara – including rallies attacking the Turkish leadership in Stockholm and the burning of the holy Quran outside Turkey’s embassy – led the latter to block its accession to the coalition.

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Featured image: Swedish demonstrators protesting the country’s decision to submit a NATO bid in March 2022 (Swedish state TT)

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