

Bulgaria's Willingness to Host NATO Naval Center Is Aimed at Containing Russia in the Black Sea

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In [a joint statement](#) between NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, the latter announced last Thursday that the Bulgarian Black Sea city of Varna is a willing new home of NATO's Naval Force Coordination Center. NATO's Maritime Headquarters is currently located in the United Kingdom, but Stoltenberg thanked his Bulgarian counterpart for its "strong commitment" and "strong focus" on so-called "Black Sea security." By Black Sea security, it was of course meant that they want to contain Russia.

As revealed by Stoltenberg, "NATO as an alliance has stepped up our presence in the Black Sea region, in the air, on land, but also at sea, with also more naval exercises." The potential establishment of a NATO Coordination Center on the Black Sea is an obvious attempt by the U.S.-led NATO to duplicate infrastructure and missile systems in the region aimed against Russia and is accelerating because of NATO's complex relations with Turkey. Given that they cannot control the Black Sea region on their own because of the complex geopolitical situation, a NATO presence in Varna is very important as it is close to Russia's ports and Ukraine, in which the latter can be used provocatively.

However, as NATO is aimed against Russia, Bulgaria now risks becoming a legitimate target for Russian strategic forces. NATO hopes that by using Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Georgia, all Black Sea countries, Russia can be contained in the event that Turkey truly becomes rogue against the alliance and does not block Russia from leaving the Black Sea via the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. These strategic straits are crucial for Russia's maritime trade, and it is expected by NATO that Turkey would block these water lanes in the event of a hypothetical war against the Eurasian Giant.

NATO is working closely with Georgia that has openly announced its desires to join NATO and is well on the path of becoming a member. On the opposite side of the Black Sea and neighboring Bulgaria to the north is Romania, whose air bases, are for U.S. use. In Ukraine, an American center was built, which is basically a military base. Bulgaria's latest desire for American servitude shows that Washington's interests are through all NATO structures in all countries in the Black Sea region, besides Turkey. Although Turkey has mostly been a loyal NATO member, its recent independent policies under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has caused worry and angst with leading NATO countries.

The 1936 Montreux Convention, which gives Turkey control of passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, regulates the transit of naval warships, but also guarantees the passage of civilian ships during peacetime. Because of that convention and complicated relations with Turkey, the possibility of a large number of U.S. warships being

passed through is precluded. For these reasons, Washington are looking for ways to destroy that convention.

The truth remains that [only Turkey and Greece](#) have the potential capability to block Russia in the Black Sea. It is for this reason that the U.S. has turned to [Greece as a Plan B](#). Although It may appear at first that the combined strength of Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Georgia could be enough to contain Russia in the Black Sea, their combined navies actually do not have the strength to challenge Russia in the Black Sea without the participation of Turkey. However, Russia still faces significant problems as not only it can be opposed in the Black Sea, but Russia will still have to navigate into the Greek-controlled Aegean Sea. Any full NATO participation against Russia in the Black Sea region will be highly problematic for Moscow.

Therefore, with Bulgaria's continued submission into NATO interests, Russia will be forced to identify all of these facilities in Bulgaria, as well as Romania and other countries, as legitimate military targets as the U.S. and NATO have already put Russia in an unenviable position.

It remains to be seen how the general Bulgarian people view these latest provocations considering that the root of Bulgarian independence from the Ottoman yolk was only achieved because of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) and there is still strong Orthodox solidarity. However, with Bulgaria willingly wanting to open a NATO Naval Center on its territory, and the country's political establishment being [controlled by Atlanticists](#), it is unlikely that Bulgaria will retract from its anti-Russian agenda anytime soon. Regardless, the opening of a NATO Naval Command Center on the Black Sea will be a serious concern and one that Moscow's policymakers must immediately consider.

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