

Dangerous Crossroads: NATO's commander suggests to deploy troops in Romania and Bulgaria

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*Once again, NATO is on the verge of unnecessarily escalating tensions in Eastern Europe for the sole purpose of confronting Russia. According to recent statements by some of its top officers, **the Western military alliance plans to deploy troops in Romania and Bulgaria as a way to strengthen the current "security scheme" for Ukraine.** In practice, this type of attitude only tends to further increase polarization and discord between the states in that region, undermining any search for international peace and stability.*

According to a recent report by Der Spiegel, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, **General Tod Wolters**, suggested that the Western alliance should send military forces to Bulgaria and Romania. The reason for such maneuver would be the supposed need to face the growth of the Russian military presence on the western border. Basically, Tod Walters advocates that Romania and Bulgaria be included in NATO's current defense scheme for Ukraine, whose remnants also include Poland and the Baltics.

In that way, it would be possible to create an Eastern Europe almost entirely occupied by the alliance. Such an extended occupation plan has been called "**Enhanced Forward Presence**" and seems to be NATO's bet in order to gain positions and undermine any Russian or Belarusian influence in Eastern Europe.

There is no doubt that such a plan would be harmful to the search for regional peace, but the big problem is that such a measure has also been called for by the Romanian and Bulgarian governments themselves, which seem increasingly misled by NATO's narratives about supposed Russian plans for that region. States with less military and economic power and low international influence tend to be the most affected by the spread of this type of fallacious discourse and that is why there is currently a tendency among Eastern European nations to more and more demand a NATO presence in their territories. Romania and Bulgaria - as well as the Baltics and Poland - fear suffering the collateral effects of a possible conflict between Ukraine and Russia and have bet on the western alliance as an important ally in the face of this (non-existent) threat.

NATO has so far not provided any precise information about the possibility of boosting its troops in Romania and Bulgaria and has not commented about Wolters' words. However, under pressure from the international media, spokespersons for the alliance said that the topic could be discussed in upcoming summits. Amid the current tensions on the Russian western border, any form of hardening opposition to Moscow is expected to be discussed, which worries security analysts around the world, considering the harmful effects of this

type of attitude on the negotiation and rapprochement process that could start soon.

The recent virtual summit between Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin brought, despite the tensions and uncertainties, some kind of “hope”, as the meeting ended with a mutual promise of willingness for dialogue between the leaders of NATO and Russia. Moscow demanded an end to NATO military maneuvers in Eastern Europe as an elementary condition for a summit between Russia and the Western governments to happen. Now, with such a possibility of sending more troops to the region, the possibility of such a Moscow-NATO summit has diminished, further threatening the search for the pacification of the European space.

There are only two ways to interpret the deployment of new NATO troops at the present time: either the alliance is giving a clear signal that it has no interest in the summit or a peaceful solution to the eastern European situation, or it is giving the green light to the dialogue saying, on the other hand, that if its interests are not reached, the occupation of the region and the encirclement against Russia will increase even more. In both cases, NATO’s game looks like a big strategic mistake.

If Russia has no interest in invading or declaring war on any European country and NATO leaders and strategists know it does not. The Russian interest in the end of NATO’s occupation of Eastern Europe is to quell the violence and hostility that have remained for decades in the region, paving the way for a possibility of peaceful dispute between Moscow and the West to influence local states.

Russia is also interested in protecting its own borders, which suffer direct and collateral effects from the increase of enemy forces, but there is no “fear” on the part of Moscow regarding the presence of troops in neighboring countries, simply because there is no interest in the confrontation. That is why trying to play Russia using hostile forces in neighboring countries as a trump card seems like a big strategic mistake.

For the sake of peace and security of all states, the best thing for NATO to do is to decline any interest in escalating hostilities, focusing on the possibility of peaceful dialogue with Russia in search of a joint solution for the benefit of all sides.

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