

Does The Atlantic Alliance Need a “Name Change”: NATO Opens Japan Office, Deepening Indo-Pacific Engagement

Two sides to upgrade cooperation on cyber, disruptive tech and disinformation

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NATO is planning to open a liaison office in Tokyo, the first of its kind in Asia, Nikkei Asia has learned.

The station will allow the military alliance to conduct periodic consultations with Japan and key partners in the region such as South Korea, Australia and New Zealand as China emerges as a new challenge, alongside its traditional focus on Russia.

NATO and Japan will also upgrade their cooperation, aiming to sign an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) before the NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 11-12. The two sides will deepen collaboration in tackling cyber threats, coordinate stances on emerging and disruptive technologies, and exchange notes on fighting disinformation.

The plans were confirmed by both Japanese and NATO officials.

The idea of opening a liaison office was first discussed between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg during the latter’s visit to Tokyo at the end of January. In mid-April, the alliance circulated a draft proposal among its 31 members, according to a person with knowledge of the proceedings.

The proposal is to open a one-person liaison office in Tokyo next year. Whether the Japanese side provides the office space or if NATO funds the station is still under negotiation. NATO has similar liaison offices at the United Nations in New York, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna, as well as in Georgia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Kuwait.

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