

War Preparations against Russia: NATO Builds Infrastructure for Permanent Military Presence Near Russia's Borders

The buildup is viewed by Russia as a provocation and a threat to the entire region's security and peace

By [Alex Gorka](#)

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A group of about 50 combat engineers based at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown were deployed to Latvia on April 29 as part of Operation Reassurance. The mission is to build a town for 500 soldiers. According to commanding officer Lt.-Col. Chris Cotton, the installation will have "everything you would expect in a small town, from its kitchen to its quarters, its electrical distribution system, water distribution system, internet, gym facilities that would allow people to survive over the long term in Latvia". Obviously, this is an element of vast infrastructure to provide for a long-term commitment.

In early April, a US-led battle group of 1,350 soldiers for NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Eastern Europe arrived at its base near Orzysz in northeastern Poland. It took place just a few days after a NATO-Russia Council meeting took place on March 30. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called the talks with Moscow "frank" and "constructive". Then the usual song and dance followed under the slogan of Russian threat.

British RAF fighters are scheduled to be stationed to Romania this May. In March the first of 800 UK troops arrived in Estonia supported by around 300 armed vehicles. Along with French and Danish forces they'll be stationed there on what NATO leadership calls "rotational basis". In January, German and Belgian forces arrived in Lithuania near the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.

The UK leads [the Estonia Battlegroup](#) while other NATO members are deploying forces to Latvia, Lithuania and Poland as part of the bloc's Enhanced Forward Presence battalion. All in all, 4,000 NATO troops with tanks, armored vehicles, air support, and high-tech intelligence centers deployed to Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

In accordance with the fiscal year 2017 European Reassurance Initiative [budget proposal](#), the US Army is reopening or creating five equipment-storage sites in the Netherlands, Poland, Belgium and two locations in Germany.



Last September, the service began to assemble more Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) for permanent storage in Europe. Those stocks will be sufficient for another armored brigade to fall in on. The rotating brigade will bring its own equipment. The move will add hundreds of

the Army's most advanced weapons systems to beef up the US European Command's combat capability. It will also free up an entire brigade's worth of weapons currently being used by US forces training on the continent to enable more American troops to be rushed in on short notice.

An armored brigade combat team comprises about 4,200 troops and includes approximately 250 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Paladin self-propelled howitzers, plus 1,750 wheeled vehicles. The proposed budget increase includes a \$1.8bn outlay on 45,000 GPS-guided smart bombs and laser-guided rockets to boost the precision strike capability.

Also last month, more than 1,200 troops from 12 countries, including the non-bloc participant Sweden, took part in two-week NATO military drills in Latvia dubbed Summer Shield.

"This deployment is, of course, a threat to us", Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksey Meshkov [said](#), arguing that the large-scale drills at Russia's doorstep are bound to "gravely increase the risk of incidents".

He vowed a proportionate response.

"They always have one thing on their mind: the 'Russian threat' myth, 'Russian aggression' slander and endless mantras about the need to confront it collectively", the Russian Foreign Ministry [said](#) in March following a NATO foreign ministers' meeting.



The Baltic States and Poland will have to shoulder the financial burden of maintaining the military facilities. The Baltic States incurred significant expenses in rebuilding Ämari and Zokniai airbases. For instance, [Estonia has spent 70 million euros in three years to modernize and maintain](#) Ämari airbase. The new base in Latvia built by Canadian engineers is also not a free lunch.

The buildup is viewed by Russia as a provocation and a threat to the entire region's security and peace. The alliance is trying to whip up tensions in Europe to reinforce its relevance in the ever changing world. It needs a fictional enemy to keep it together.

The deployment breaches the [Russia-NATO Founding Act](#) (1997). By signing the document NATO pledged not to seek "additional permanent stationing of substantial ground combat forces" in the nations closer to Russia "in the current and foreseeable security environment". The argument that the forces are being deployed on temporary basis doesn't stand up to scrutiny. Each army combat unit has an operational cycle, including training events. It will inevitably hold exercises somewhere. The forces are training nowhere else but in the proximity of Russia's borders.

The Canadian engineers are constructing nothing else but a town. The official used the term "town" in his statement. Towns are not built to enable army units to hold exercises and then go. A town for the military is an element of permanent infrastructure. Once the expenditure is approved, it means the living quarters and facilities are to remain in Latvia for many years.

The announced plans are nothing else but a permanent military presence of substantial forces. With the Founding Act invalid, the Russia-NATO military relationship will be left without a legal basis to go upon.

The document has played a very important role in the relationship for 20 years. Now this fundamental document appears to be dead as a result of NATO's provocative activities near the Russia's territory. The war preparations greatly reduce European security and the chances for revival of constructive dialogue between Russia and NATO. It leads to the conclusion that the alliance is preparing for a new Cold War with unpredictable results.

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