

Russia's top five myths about NATO

Myth 1: NATO whips up 'hysteria' over Russia's exercises

Every nation has the right to conduct exercises, but it is important that they are conducted transparently and in line with international obligations.

To promote transparency, members of the OSCE, including Russia, commit to follow the rules of the [Vienna Document](#). If an exercise exceeds 9,000 personnel, it is subject to notification, and if it exceeds 13,000 personnel, observers from OSCE states must be invited to attend the exercise. Since the end of the Cold War, Russia has never opened an exercise to mandatory Vienna Document observation.

NATO's concerns about exercise ZAPAD 2017 were a direct result of Russia's lack of transparency. Both the scale and geographical scope of the exercise significantly exceeded what Russia had previously announced, including in the NATO-Russia Council. Allies made this clear to Russia at a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council in October 2017.

Russia has also used large snap exercises, including with tens of thousands of troops, to intimidate its neighbours. This practice raises tension and undermines trust. Russia's intervention in Georgia in 2008 and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 were masked by snap exercises.

Myth 2: NATO wants to prepare Europe's civilian infrastructure to start a war

NATO is a defensive alliance, whose purpose is to protect our member states. Military mobility is key to deterrence in peacetime and key to our collective defence in times of crisis. NATO is working closely with Allies to ensure that our bridges, roads, ports and rail networks are capable of transporting military equipment and personnel across our Allies' borders.

This is not a preparation for war. This is about updating the military requirements for civilian infrastructure at a time when we see increased challenges to our security, including as a result of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing destabilisation of eastern Ukraine.

NATO is cooperating with Allies and the European Union to remove bureaucratic hurdles to allow us to move forces across Allied territory. This involves sharing information on standards, requirements, and any challenges related to civilian infrastructure. We are also working closely with national governments and the private sector to ensure that infrastructure in Allied territory remains in top condition.

Myth 3: NATO's presence in the Baltic region is dangerous and unpopular

NATO has taken defensive and proportionate measures in response to a changed security environment. Following Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine, Allies requested a greater NATO presence in the region.

In 2016, we deployed four multinational battlegroups – or “enhanced forward presence” – to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In 2017, the battlegroups became fully operational. Troops from Europe and North America work very closely together with home defence forces. We hold all our forces to the highest standards of conduct, both on and off duty.

NATO's presence in the region is at the specific request of the host nations, and enjoys significant public support. A [2016 Gallup poll](#) found that most people in Allied countries in the Baltic region associate NATO with the protection of their country.

As part of NATO Allies' ongoing commitment to transparency, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania hosted Russian arms control inspectors in November 2017. The inspectors toured a number of military sites, including some used by multinational NATO battlegroups.



NATO personnel meet Russian arms control inspectors at Estonia's 1st Infantry Brigade in Tapa on 8 November 2017

Myth 4: NATO violates the Non-Proliferation Treaty

At the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, Allies reaffirmed their full support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Any stationing of US nuclear weapons on the territories of our Allies is fully consistent with the NPT. These weapons remain under the custody and control of the United States at all times.

Furthermore, NATO's nuclear arrangements predate the NPT. They were fully addressed when the treaty was negotiated.

Russia, however, has increased its nuclear rhetoric, stepped up nuclear exercises and regularly rehearses rapid nuclear escalation. Russia has also threatened to base nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad and Crimea.

Russia's actions and rhetoric do not contribute to transparency and predictability.

Myth 5: NATO missile defence threatens Russian security

NATO's missile defence system is purely defensive and not directed against Russia. Bilateral agreements between the US and host nations do not allow missile sites to be used for any purpose other than missile defence.

This system defends against ballistic missiles from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO's missile defence system is neither intended nor capable of undermining Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities.

NATO has attempted many times to cooperate with Russia on missile defence. Russian statements threatening to target Allies because of NATO's ballistic missile defence are unacceptable and counterproductive.

For more information, please visit our 'NATO-Russia Setting the Record Straight' portal on the NATO website:

<http://goo.gl/GvTesc>

Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) – Press & Media Section

Tel.: +32(0)2 707 9867

E-mail: moc@hq.nato.int

Follow us @NATOPress

www.nato.int