

Russia's top five myths about NATO

Myth 1: 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. More than 4,500 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 2: 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 3: 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.

Myth 4: NATO promised Russia it would not expand after the Cold War

NATO Allies take decisions by consensus and these are recorded. There is no record of any such decision having been taken by NATO. Personal assurances from individual leaders cannot replace Alliance consensus and do not constitute formal NATO agreement.

NATO's “Open Door Policy” is based on Article 10 of the Alliance's founding document, the North Atlantic Treaty (1949). The Treaty states that NATO membership is open to any “European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area”. It states that any decision on enlargement must be made “by unanimous agreement”. NATO has never revoked Article 10, nor limited the potential for enlargement. Over the past 65 years, 29 countries have chosen freely, and in accordance with their domestic democratic processes, to join NATO. This is their sovereign choice.

In addition, at the time of the alleged promise, the Warsaw Pact still existed. Its members did not agree on its dissolution until 1991. The idea of their accession to NATO was not on the agenda in 1989. This was confirmed by Mikhail Gorbachev himself in an interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta and Russia Beyond the Headlines in an interview in 2014:

“The topic of ‘NATO expansion’ was not discussed at all, and it wasn’t brought up in those years. I say this with full responsibility. Not a single Eastern European country raised the issue, not even after the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist in 1991. Western leaders didn’t bring it up, either.”

Myth 5: NATO’s intervention in Libya in 2011 was illegal and illegitimate

The NATO-led operation in Libya – Operation Unified Protector – was carried out from 31 March to 31 October 2011. It had a clear mandate from the United Nations Security Council, under Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1970 and 1973. UNSCR 1973 authorized the international community “to take all necessary measures” to “protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack”.

This is what NATO did, with the political and military support of regional states and members of the Arab League. No country in the Security Council, including Russia, voted against UNSCR 1970 and UNSCR 1973.

Following the operation, NATO cooperated with the UN International Commission of Inquiry on Libya, which found no breach of UNSCR 1973 or international law, concluding instead that “NATO conducted a highly precise campaign with a demonstrable determination to avoid civilian casualties.”

For more information, please visit our ‘NATO-Russia Setting the Record Straight’ portal on the NATO website: <http://goo.gl/GvTesc>

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