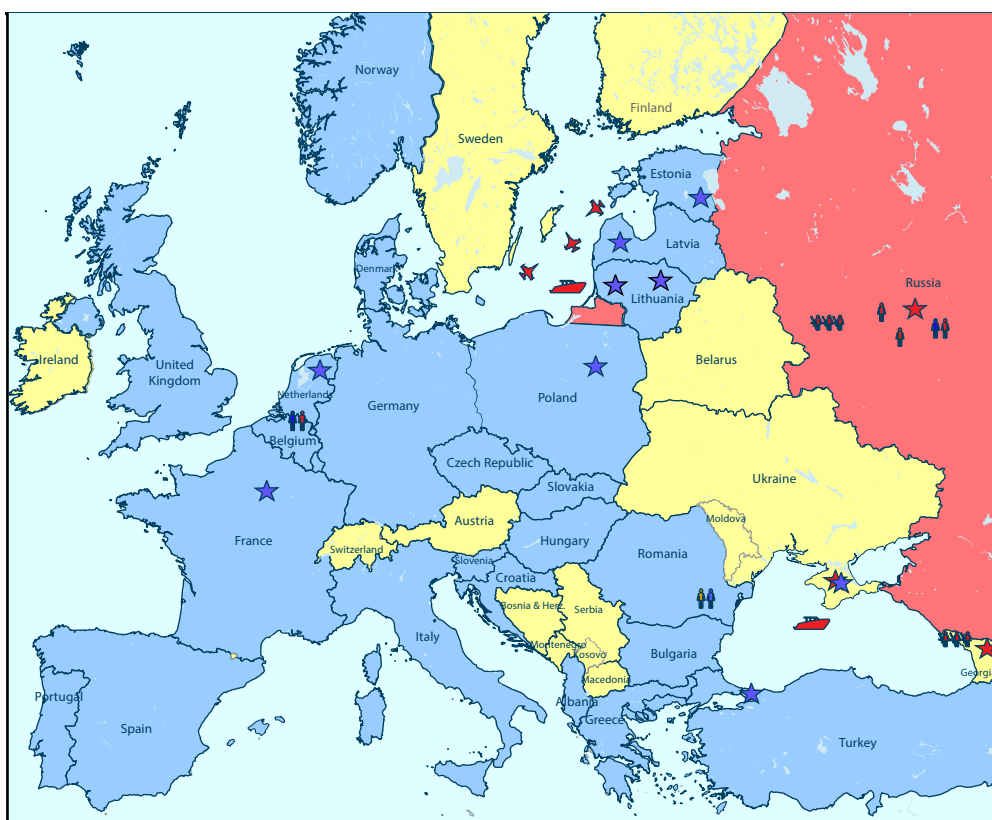


KEY TAKE-AWAY:

Russia continued to aggressively posture against NATO in the Baltic and Black Sea regions while presenting itself as a responsible regional actor and victim of alleged western provocation. The first meeting of the NATO-Russia Council since June 2014 failed to make concrete progress, and the Russian Minister of Defense accused NATO of provocative troop deployments in Eastern Europe. Russia continued to conduct a campaign of information warfare against the Baltic States paired with political pressure and military provocation. The efforts aim to provoke ethnic strife and undermine the stability of regional governments. Russia's actions prompted the Latvian government to ban access to a major Russian news outlet. Similarly, the Estonian Internal Security Service accused Russian intelligence services of increasing subversive activity against the Baltic States. Russia aggressively targeted U.S. military assets in the Baltic region, deployed to support NATO member states and regional partners.

Russia's aggressive responses to U.S. military exercises in the Black Sea region indicate its willingness to escalate tensions in that theatre. Russian exercises in the Russian-occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, its formal recognition of the border with South Ossetia, and the South Ossetian announcement of a planned referendum on joining Russia may lay the ground work for formal Russian annexation of the occupied Georgian region. Russia also escalated tensions with NATO-allied Turkey after a Russian court in Crimea banned the governing bodies of the Crimean Tatars, the Mejlis, due to their alleged extremist activities. Turkey condemned the action and promised to continue to support the "just struggle" of the Crimean Tatars. Russia's military aggression in the Black Sea region is encouraging regional actors to increase military cooperation. The Presidents of Ukraine and Romania met to discuss Ukrainian cooperation with a proposed NATO Black Sea flotilla comprised of ships from Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania and potentially supplemented by Georgian and Ukrainian vessels. Russia's continued military aggression against NATO partners is designed to intimidate vulnerable European states and to undermine the unity of NATO and the European Union.



- Russia
- NATO Member
- Non-NATO Member
- Official Meeting
- Significant Rhetoric
- Protests
- ★ Government Announcement
- ✈ Air Activity
- 🚢 Naval Activity
- 👤 Ground Activity
- 🛡 Anti-Air Activity
- 💥 Major Clash

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Political Activity

- ★06, 13 APR: Dutch voters rejected an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement that aims to increase Ukraine's integration with EU political and economic structures. Russian media outlets actively campaigned against the agreement, capitalizing on anti-EU sentiment in the Netherlands to undermine Ukrainian integration.
- ★07 APR: Latvia prohibited the broadcast of a Russian state-owned media outlet for "inciting ethnic hatred." Russia accused Latvia of attempting to "wipe Russian mass media out of the country." Russian media has actively inflated ethnic and political tensions between ethnic Latvians and ethnic Russians in Latvia since the occupation of Crimea.
- ★08, 14 APR: Turkey arrested two Russian citizens for spying and banned access to the website of a major Russian state-run news outlet.
- ★11, 26, 27 APR: The Russian-backed separatist territory of South Ossetia, Georgia announced that it will hold a referendum on joining the Russian Federation before August. Russia and South Ossetia formally defined the location of the Ossetian-Russian border.
- ★11 APR: A cyberattack on the Lithuanian Parliament disrupted an international human rights conference on Russian-occupied Crimea and potentially affected government websites. Russia has conducted cyber-attacks in Eastern Europe before, but Lithuanian officials declined to comment on the perpetrator of the attack.
- ★12, 29 APR: Estonia's Internal Security Service accused Russian intelligence services of expanding destabilizing operations against Estonia and the EU. The Estonian Minister of Interior announced that Estonian Special Forces would need to be expanded to adapt to a changing security situation on Estonia's eastern border.
- 👤19 APR: The French Foreign Minister visited Moscow to meet the Russian Foreign Minister and President to discuss economic ties and the fight against terrorism.
- 👤20, 27 APR: The first meeting of the NATO-Russia Council since June 2014 took place in Brussels but failed to make significant progress on resolving mutual security issues. The Russian Minister of Defense accused NATO of provocative troop deployments in Eastern Europe.
- 👤21, 27 APR: The President of Romania met the President of Ukraine to discuss potential Ukraine-NATO cooperation in the Black Sea. Russia claimed that the proposed plan would "seriously undermine" regional security and threatened to make an "adequate response."
- ★26, 27 APR: A Russian court in Crimea banned the governing bodies of the Crimean Tatars, the Mejlis, due to their alleged extremist activities. Turkey condemned the action and promised to continue to support the "just struggle" of the Crimean Tatars.

- 👤29 APR: The Russian Foreign Minister described Lithuania as the "most aggressive, Russophobic" country and criticized the Baltic States for not expressing gratitude to Moscow for letting them "go in peace" after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- ★28 APR: France's lower house of parliament narrowly approved a non-binding resolution supporting lifting sanctions against Russia put in place after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 in a vote of 55-44. Only 101 out of 577 parliamentarians participated in the vote.
- 👤29 APR: The Russian Foreign Minister announced that Russia would "take certain military and technical measures" if Sweden joined NATO. A leading member of the Russian Parliament elaborated by claiming that Russia would deploy more forces to its northern border and strengthen the Northern Fleet.

Military Activity

- 👤11-12 APR: Russian Su-24 fighters conducted close overflights of a U.S. destroyer in the Baltic Sea while executing joint training with the Polish military. A U.S. official described the action as "provocative and unprofessional."
- 👤14 APR: A Russian Su-27 fighter intercepted a U.S. RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft while performing "erratic and aggressive maneuvers" over the Baltic Sea.
- ★14, 25 APR: Lithuanian border guards reported that three unmarked helicopters may have evaded Lithuanian radar systems and violated its airspace. The Lithuanian military reported plans to deploy three new long range early warning radar systems near its borders with Russia and Belarus. Lithuania previously accused Russia and Belarus of expanding intelligence operations against Lithuania. This may indicate that Russia has the ability to conduct covert violations of Lithuanian territory.
- 👤18 APR: Over 2,000 Russian servicemen and 500 pieces of military hardware conducted exercises in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia.
- 👤22-25 APR: Ten ships of the Russian Baltic Fleet conducted exercises near Kaliningrad.
- 👤22-23 APR: Fifteen ships from the Russian Black Sea Fleet conducted exercises near Crimea.
- ★25 APR: The Polish Minister of Defense authorized the creation of paramilitary territorial defense units that would ultimately be comprised of 35,000 men to counter the Russia's "aggressive intentions" to destabilize Europe.
- 👤27 APR: Russia began forming a new motor-infantry division near Smolensk in its Western Military District. The division is the first of three planned units consisting of approximately 10,000 men.
- 👤29 APR: A Russian Su-27 intercepted a U.S. RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft in an "unsafe and unprofessional" manner in international airspace above the Baltic Sea.