

Directed against Russia: 'Aurora', the Largest Military Exercise in Sweden in 20 years, Aligns Sweden Even Closer with NATO

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For three weeks in September 2017, [Sweden](#) will be turned into a military training ground. A third of the country, especially the capital Stockholm, the second largest city Gothenburg and the island of Gotland will be designated training areas. In total there will be about 20,000 participating soldiers, from the United States, Finland, France, Estonia, Norway and Denmark, in addition to soldiers from the host country.

Historically, Sweden managed to stay out of war for over 180 years, from 1814 against Napoleon, until the era after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This neutrality policy was, and still is, hugely popular in population and even with many politicians. The same goes for the policy of no nuclear weapons on Swedish soil.

Even though the political establishment had secret and close military cooperation with NATO during the cold war, the establishment decided it was time to come out in the open and formalize it in the 1990s.

Sweden has been member of the NATO-program "Partnership for Peace" since 1994. Since then, it has been one of the most active participants in NATO-missions in Afghanistan, Balkans and the war on Libya. The country reintroduced conscription a few months ago, due to fears the country wouldn't be able to recruit enough mercenary 'professional' forces for every conflict the military wishes to participate in.



Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Margot Elisabeth Wallström (Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Also, since 2009, as part of a commitment to EU, and as another breach of this neutrality, Sweden has pledged itself to the defense of EU-countries. Since EU-membership largely overlaps with NATO-membership, it would be hard to separate these in a war. As foreign minister Margot Wallstrom [said](#) in 2015,

“Sweden will not remain passive if another EU country or Nordic country is struck by disaster or comes under attack, and we expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected.”

In the summer 2016, the country joined Host Country Agreement with NATO, which means that the pact will store equipment in Sweden and be able to use the country for transport and transit of forces if a crisis should occur in the region. The host country agreement does not mention nuclear weapons. Since the NATO nuclear powers as a policy neither confirms or denies if their forces carries nuclear weapons, there are no real guarantees that nuclear weapons will not be brought into Sweden.

[Sweden](#) is also a part of NATO’s Rapid Reaction Force, even though it is not formally a member. It participates in the joint NATO air transport fleet, which will automatically be used in any conflicts anywhere in the world where NATO needs rapid deployment. This is part of the Swedish security establishments very determined policy of gradually integrating the country in the nuclear alliance. This air-cooperation consists of 10 NATO-countries, plus Finland and Sweden. It will have Boeing C-17 airplanes which will be able transport 77 tons of weapons and supplies up to 4450 kilometers without refueling. In addition it will get 180 Airbus A400 for troop transports. Swedish troops and equipment have been used in the conflict in Mali.

When these NATO-forces will exercise on Swedish soil in 'Aurora', it will be the first time the Host Country Agreement has been used. This NATO-alignment has happened steadily. and always by denying the final goal, which is full participation in the nuclear alliance.

Two senior military officers, Micael Bydén, Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, and Chief of Defence Staff Dennis Gyllensporre, recently [gave a recommendation](#) to the Swedish government. They want a change the military stance to a 'treaty-bound' defense commitments, in effect meaning NATO.

Chairman of the Swedish parliament's defense committee, Allan Widman, commented approvingly

"The fact is that Sweden has been on its way to a NATO-membership for 25 years. Everything that has happened the last 25 years, have been in the direction of NATO. This recommendation is just yet another confirmation of where Sweden really belongs."

Sweden has been courted by a steady stream of dignitaries from the US/NATO military complex over the last few years; amongst them *éminence grise* of the military-industrial complex, senator John McCain, chairman of NATO military committee Peter Pavel, NATO chairman Jens Stoltenberg and former NATO commander Philip Breedlove.



Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (Nov. 2014)
(Source: [NATO](#))

At the same time there is a massive propaganda offensive for NATO and against Russia in Swedish media. Bought journalists have come back from junket trips paid by NATO gushing with enthusiasm for deployment of missiles and other close cooperation. Editorials in all major newspapers and state TV repeat bold statements from Pentagon and the Swedish army command without ever questioning them, showing that they identify with the same interests. But even with this intense campaign, the majority of the Swedish population is against NATO-membership.

US militarists have long set their eyes on the island of Gotland, where a large part of the Aurora exercise will happen. This is part of a long standing plan of encircling Russia as a

preparation for a conflict.

[In April](#), general David G Perkins, leader of United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, visited the island accompanied by the leader of the Swedish army, Karl Engelbrektson. Perkins [declared](#)

“Gotland is an unsinkable ship and a strategic important position in this region”. “It is not only important for Sweden to have it well defended. We have a common vision of peace here”, continued the veteran commander from the war of aggression against Iraq in 2003. “This is a great opportunity to become closer friends with Sweden.”

The US general himself specifically asked to inspect the strategic island as a part of his visit. The army chief said the visit is a part of the Swedish desire for military cooperation with the US, which he thought was very important.

The leader of the American forces in Europe, general Ben Hodges, has earlier [declared](#) his wish for deployment of Patriot air-defense systems on the this ‘unsinkable ship’. If these weapons are deployed, there can be no doubt of who they are directed against: the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, and if needed, to exclude Russia totally from the Baltic, making it a NATO-lake.

These missiles will be part of the US missile defense system, part of an integrated nuclear strategy, which Russia has reacted strongly against. The idea is to be able to intercept the bulk of Russia’s nuclear missiles on the ground before they can be launched, then using missile interception capabilities to take care of any stray Russian missiles that manage to be launched. Denmark, a NATO-country, has joined the system, with deployment on several frigates, and neighboring NATO-member Norway is in the final phases of agreeing to integrate in this system. This will sharply increase the tensions in the northern part of Europe, and make it a central battlefield for a nuclear war.

The Aurora exercise will fit in with the grand US scheme for the Nordic region. The US Marine Corps has taken possession its first base in Norway, This policy was seen as too provocative during the cold war, but is now seen as appropriate.

As part of this, The United States [wants to](#) practice moving a US Marine Corps brigade from Trondheim, on Norway’s west coast, to Sweden. According to media close to NATO, is this scenario part of the backdrop for the arrival of 330 US Marines at a base in Værnes, in the central parts of Norway, with strategic road communications with Sweden, ideal for transiting soldiers and equipment of Sweden per the Host Country Agreement in a future conflict.

The US military unit is an advance guard with orders to prepare exercises and sort out other details in cooperation with Sweden. The planned deployment of a US Marine brigade would make use of pre-positioned materiel in US storage depots in Norway’s Trøndelag region and potentially also of equipment that may have been stored in Sweden, permitting the unit to move as an armoured, mechanized spearhead.

Even with all these constant baby steps to NATO-membership, the Aurora exercise will be another sharp notch that will increase the tensions in Europe.

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