

Military Buildup. NATO Now Considers Russia as “An Enemy”. Militarization of “Russia’s Neighbors”

By [RT](#)

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NATO’s second-in-command says Russia is now an enemy, not a partner

NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow now says that the allied group has been compelled to treat Russia “as more of an enemy than a partner,” according to an Associated Press report published Thursday.

The 61-year-old former United States ambassador to Russia reportedly told journalists this week that Moscow’s role in the ongoing crisis in Ukraine has forced NATO to reconsider the alliance’s opinion on Russia, and that additional troops may soon be mobilized to the region as tensions worsen.

AP journalist Robert Burns wrote on Thursday that Vershbow said the Kremlin’s perceived part in the recent events in Ukraine “marks a turning point in decades of effort by NATO to draw Moscow closer.”

NATO’s second-in-command reportedly told journalists that the alliance is now considering new measures meant to counter any future acts of aggression on the part of Russia aimed at partner nations, and soon could deploy a larger number of combat forces to Eastern Europe.

Journalists reporting for Civil.Ge wrote on Thursday that Vershbow told the audience at a panel discussion in Washington, DC one day earlier that NATO should deploy “defensive assets to the region.”

“We need to step up our support for defense reforms and military modernization of Russia’s neighbors, and not just of Ukraine, but also Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan,” Vershbow said, according to the Civil Georgia site.

NATO should think about “upgrading” joint exercises among partner nations, the site quoted Vershbow as saying during the event, while acknowledging that deploying forces to Georgia would be a “controversial” maneuver.

“It is also important for the United States to show leadership... to make sure that next steps that NATO will make, for example at the summit in September, will be adequate response to what’s happening in Ukraine,” the Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Alasania said during the discussion.

“The West should now seize the opportunity and create the reality on the ground by

accepting membership of aspirant countries, by putting purely defensive assets in aspirant countries and predominantly in Georgia,” Alasania added. “What is important now is to put some deterrent capabilities on the ground like air defense and anti-armor capabilities that will give us a chance to defend our freedom, because we know that if things go wrong at this point no one is coming to save us; we’ve seen that in 2008.”

Earlier this week, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said the buildup of NATO troops near Russia’s border was “unprecedented.” Weeks earlier, the US Air Force commander in charge of NATO’s military presence in Europe said that US troops may soon be deployed to the region as tensions continue to worsen near the border between Ukraine and Russia.

For weeks now, officials in Washington and Kiev have claimed that the recent separation of Crimea from Ukraine and the rash of uprisings in the country’s eastern part are the direct result of destabilization efforts spearheaded by Moscow, and both the US and European Union have introduced several rounds of sanctions against Russia as a result. The Kremlin has refuted these claims and rebuffed the sanctions, however, and earlier this week Russian Pres. Vladimir Putin accused the White House of orchestrating the Ukrainian crisis.

“I think what is happening now shows us who really was mastering the process from the beginning. But in the beginning, the United States preferred to remain in the shadow,” Putin said this week.

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