

NATO Panics as Putin Urges Trump to Force Alliance Withdrawal from Russian Border

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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While many in the media have speculated that the Kremlin had a hand in Wikileaks' procurement of hacked Podesta emails – something Julian Assange denied last week – and US intelligence services officially accused Russian government-supported hackers of interfering with the US election (providing zero proof for the allegation), the truth is that Vladimir Putin is delighted with the outcome from the US elections: not so much for Hillary's loss as that the sharp, [neo-con wing in the Pentagon has](#) been muted for the next four years.

And, in the first test of Trump's willingness to rebuild bridges with Russia, Putin's spokesman suggested that President-elect Donald Trump should begin rebuilding the U.S.-Kremlin relationship by urging NATO to withdraw forces from the Russian border. Dmitry Peskov told the Associated Press that such a move "would lead to a kind of detente in Europe." Trump repeatedly praised Putin during his campaign and suggested the U.S. abandon its commitment to the NATO alliance.

The request comes at a time of disturbing, relentless escalations in military tensions between NATO and Russia: [this week we reported](#) that NATO has placed as much as 300,000 troops on "high alert" in preparation for confrontation with Russia.

Peskov said in the interview that the NATO presence does not make Russia feel "safe." "Of course, we have to take measures to counter," he said.

Additionally, setting the stage for Trump's official position on Crimea, in a separate interview with the Associated Press on Thursday, Peskov insisted that Crimea which became part of Russia after the CIA-sponsored Ukraine presidential coup in 2014, will remain such. "No one in Russia — never — will be ready to start any kind of discussion about Crimea," he said, refusing to call it "annexation."

When asked how Trump could approach the Crimea issue, [quoted by The Hill](#), Peskov said it would take time. "We understand that it will take time for our partners in Europe, for our partners here in the United States to understand that. We are patient enough to wait until this understanding occurs here in Washington, in the States, in Europe," he said.

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But while the Crimea issue is largely moot, with the West resigned to its concession to Moscow, fears that Trump will indeed follow Russia's advice and pressure the alliance into standing down, or worse, withdraw US support, has resulted in outright panic, and according to German Spiegel, NATO strategists are planning for a scenario in which Trump orders US

troops out of Europe.

Spiegel adds that strategists from NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's staff have drafted a secret report which includes a worst-case scenario in which Trump orders US troops to withdraw from Europe and fulfills his threat to make Washington less involved in European security.

"For the first time, the US exit from NATO has become a threat" which would mean the end of the bloc, a German NATO officer told the magazine. During his campaign, Trump repeatedly slammed NATO, calling the alliance "obsolete." He also suggested that under his administration, the US may refuse to come to the aid of NATO allies unless they "pay their bills" and "fulfill their obligations to us."

Of course, this is the [same Spiegel](#) which after Trump's victory has predicted the end of the world.



"We are experiencing a moment of the highest and yet unprecedented uncertainty in the transatlantic relationship," said Wolfgang Ischinger, former German ambassador in Washington and head of the prominent Munich Security Conference. By criticizing the collective defense, Trump has questioned the basic pillar of NATO as a whole, Ischinger added.

Alternatively, by putting into question a core support pillar behind NATO's endless provocations and troop buildup at Russia's border, Trump may prevent World War III.

NATO, however, demands its way or no other way at all, and it why Ischinger demands that the president-elect reassure his "European allies" that he remains firm on the US commitment under Article 5 of the NATO charter prior to his inauguration.

This wasn't the only criticism launched at Trump by the military alliance: earlier this week, Stoltenberg slammed Trump's agenda, saying: "All allies have made a solemn commitment to defend each other. This is something absolutely unconditioned." Perhaps the commitment was only contingent on having a resident in the Oval Office who put the interests of the Military Industrial Complex ahead of those of, for example, the American people?

NATO's panic has grown so vast that out of fear Trump would not appear in Brussels even after his inauguration, NATO has re-scheduled its summit – expected to take place in early 2017 – to next summer, Spiegel said.

The NATO report likely also reflects current moods within the EU establishment as well, as Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, has called on the member states to establish Europe's own military. Washington "will not ensure the security of the Europeans in the long term... we have to do this ourselves," he argued on Thursday. Because Greek troops just can't wait to give their lives to defend German citizens and vice versa.

Meanwhile, Spiegel admits that despite NATO's bluster, Trump has all the leverage, and if Trump is serious about reducing the number of US troops stationed in Europe, large NATO countries like Germany have little to offer, Spiegel said. Even major member states'

militaries lack units able to replace the Americans, which in turn may trigger debate on strengthening NATO's nuclear arm, a sensitive issue in most European countries for domestic reasons.

How will Trump respond? It is unclear: while in his pre-election rhetoric, Trump pushed for an anti-interventionist agenda, and certainly made it seem that NATO would be weakened under his presidency, that remains to be seen as his transition team currently hammers out the specifics of his rather vague policies. We would not be surprised at all to find that for all the anti-establishment posturing, the "shadow government" – now in the hands of the Bush clan – [which Ron Paul warned against earlier](#), manages to regain dominance, and far from a detente, Trump's position emboldens NATO to pressure Putin even further. We would be delighted if our cynicism is proven wrong on this occasion.

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