



SWEDEN IN NATO

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Unlike Finland, Sweden does not share a border with Russia, so its membership in the North Atlantic Alliance might not be perceived as problematic. On the other hand, any strengthening of NATO is a challenge, as this bloc itself is a threat to Russia and Belarus (and not only to these two).

Sweden's neutrality is questionable. To see this, it is enough to look at official statistics of NATO.

Cooperation between them began when Sweden joined the Partnership for Peace program in 1994 and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (a multilateral forum for dialogue that brings together all allies and partner countries in the Euro-Atlantic region) in 1997.

Sweden is one of six countries (known as "Partners with Enhanced Capabilities" under the Partnership Interoperability Initiative) that contribute particularly significantly to NATO operations and other Alliance goals. Thus, the country has increased its capacity for dialogue and cooperation with Allies.

There is now regular political dialogue and consultation between NATO and Sweden in the form of sharing information about hybrid warfare, coordinating training and exercises, and raising general situational awareness to address common threats and develop joint actions, if necessary.

Sweden first contributed to a NATO-led operation in 1995, when it sent a battalion to the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has further supported the NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo since 1999.

Swedish personnel worked alongside NATO forces in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan from 2003 until the end of the ISAF mission in 2014. Sweden also supported the follow-on Resolute Support Mission (RSM) to further train, assist and advise Afghan security forces and agencies, until its conclusion in September 2021. Sweden has contributed more than \$13 million to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund.

In April 2011, Sweden contributed to Operation Unified Protector (OUP), the NATO military operation in Libya, under UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973. Sweden is also participating in the NATO Mission in Iraq.

In addition, Sweden has [signed a memorandum of understanding](#) for host nation support, which, subject to a national decision, allows logistical support to Allied troops on, or transiting through, its territory during exercises or in a crisis.

Sweden also supports a number of NATO Trust Fund projects in other partner countries that focus on areas such as training and assessment of military units, medical rehabilitation of wounded soldiers, explosive ordnance disposal and countering improvised explosive devices, and professional development of security-sector personnel.

Sweden participates in the Planning and Review Process, which helps the country develop its military capabilities and improve the interoperability of Swedish Armed Forces with allies and other partners.

Sweden participates in the NATO Operational Capability Concept, which uses an assessment and feedback program to develop and train partner land, sea, air or special operations forces that strive to meet NATO standards.

Sweden participates in numerous exercises and has also participated in the NATO Cyber Coalition exercise.

Sweden is cooperating with several other countries to develop a multinational rapid reaction force for European Union (EU)-led peacekeeping operations.

Since 2014, as part of the Interoperability Partnership Initiative, Sweden has participated in the Interoperability Platform, which brings together allies with selected partners involved in NATO operations.

Sweden participates in two strategic air transport initiatives: the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) program and the Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS).

NATO values Sweden's role in training the armed forces of other NATO partner countries. The Swedish Armed Forces International Centre (SWEDINT) conducts exercises and training with a focus on humanitarian assistance, rescue services, peacekeeping operations, civil preparedness and democratic

control of the armed forces. The Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations is also located at SWEDINT.

Sweden has close ties with other Nordic countries and participates in the Nordic Defense Cooperation (Nordefco), a regional defense initiative that promotes cooperation between Nordic armed forces.

In other words, Swedish-NATO cooperation is very active and longstanding. And Stockholm has helped NATO in every way possible to carry out military aggression in other countries.

It should be noted that a broad debate about the possibility of Sweden joining NATO began in late December 2012, when Swedish Defense Minister General Sverker Joransson stated in a widely circulated interview that if Sweden were attacked, it could defend itself for only one week before foreign aid was needed.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen later added that although Sweden is NATO's most active and most capable partner, it cannot count on assistance in case of attack because the security guarantee in Article 5 of the Alliance applies only to members of NATO, an organization Sweden had refused to join.

But Swedish Defense Minister Karin Enström said in a later interview that Sweden [can count on EU](#) assistance because the Lisbon Treaty includes a solidarity clause, Article 42.7, obliging EU member states to assist other EU members in case of catastrophic events or attacks.

Naturally, in 2014, after the situation with Crimea, the U.S. began to [actively incite Sweden](#) to join NATO, along with actively circulated statements about possible "Moscow's aggression." American experts believe that in a NATO conflict with Russia, for example, "during a Russian invasion of the Baltic states, Sweden would be deeply involved." Since Finland acts as a buffer against Russia, an attack from the land is highly unlikely.

In fact, Sweden would face three defensive tasks: defense against Russian air and missile attacks, defense of its vast territory against Russian infiltration, and defense of the island of Gotland and other key infrastructure so that NATO armed forces can use them to defend the entry of troops into the Baltic states and other places. This requires prepositioning aircraft and air defenses to cover Gotland and a

number of positions in Sweden. It would cost U.S. \$3.2 billion, and NATO would need to add another \$6.4 billion.

The number of supporters of the country joining NATO in Sweden has been growing steadily year-by-year. While 10 years ago, in 2012, polls showed that only 18% thought they should become a member of the alliance and 44% were against it, in 2015, 38% were already in favor and 31% were against it.

It was not only external propagandists and their agents, like Carl Bildt, who worked on NATO's image. Many Swedish international scholars also contributed to the pro-NATO discourse. They argued that the change in popular support for NATO in Sweden was made possible by appealing to the dominant discourses of "idealism" and "active internationalism."

Once an integral part of Swedish state identity, the theme of "neutrality" was [replaced by justifications](#) for the continued existence and expansion of NATO in the post-Cold War period. The meaning of "solidarity" was also changed to imply that states that care about peace should not act as "stowaways," but should be willing to act in solidarity with other European and democratic states against tyrants and terrorists.

Even in 2015, active cooperation between NATO, Sweden and Finland was seen in Stockholm as a kind of [new norm necessary for security](#) in the Baltic, though previously, in practice, Sweden had effectively used informal bilateral cooperation with the United States and other European states to ensure its security.

Therefore, the myth of the country's "armed neutrality" policy during the Cold War was not the key obstacle to gaining public support for NATO membership.

As in neighboring Finland, panicked rumors and Russophobic sentiments have been spreading in Sweden of late. Gunilla Gerolf of the Swedish Institute for International Affairs [told *The National News*](#) that "the Russians will not respect Swedish territory. They will make sure that on the first day we can't use credit cards or have electricity. That's what people expect and prepare for."

According to her, Swedes are buying special water tanks, handheld radios, camping stoves and extra food in case of conflict. The Swedish government is also making plans to replenish the large Vattenfall

oil reservoir and to use the power plant built during the Cold War.

Gerolf also believes that the island of Gotland, which was militarized again a few years ago, will serve as a support base to "deter the Russians"—or perhaps as provocation and attacks?

Most recently, Sweden took [part in cyber maneuvers](#) under NATO auspices, in December 2021. And in March-April of this year, military exercises (VIKING 22) were held on Swedish territory, where representatives of Ukraine were also present. In February 2021, the Swedish Ministry of Defense established the [Centre of Special Operations Research](#), whose leadership included representatives from NATO headquarters and the U.S. Air Force.

As for the defense industry, Sweden's defense industry possesses "significant advanced technology and combat capability," having strong industrial alliances with Great Britain, the United States and Germany. This allowed it to develop systems such as the NLAW anti-tank weapon, which was used in Ukraine against Russian forces, in conjunction with Great Britain.

The products of the Swedish military-industrial complex also include the Gripen multi-role warplane, advanced electronic warfare, aerial surveillance, intelligent artillery and counter-battery radars, all of which will be useful for future NATO allies, presumably against Russia. Therefore, the response must represent more than the standard protest notes and/or IKEA store closures.

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[Featured image](#): "Triumph of Charles X Gustavus over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth," anonymous, ca. 1655.

