



## [Russia Suspends Its Diplomatic Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization](#)

This week, Russia officially suspended its diplomatic mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The move, although not completely unexpected, is just the latest example of strained ties between the Kremlin and the West. Russia's course of action this week comes after NATO expelled 8 Russian officials from its headquarters in Brussels earlier this month, with NATO citing its belief that the personnel were secretly working as Russian intelligence officers. The alliance bloc expressed that it would still hope to keep an open dialogue channel with Russia, despite the recent souring moves from both sides. It also made clear that Russian aggression, overseas interference in elections, and the Kremlin's destructive actions in Ukraine and other places were major contributing factors to worsening NATO-Russian relations. While diplomatic cables still exist among individual nations within NATO and Russia, the planned removal of the mission signals just how far things have deteriorated between Moscow and the transatlantic security organization in particular.

Over the past decade, Russia has engaged in behavior which has increasingly strained its relationship with NATO. Following the end of the Cold War, NATO invited Russia to hold a diplomatic presence at its headquarters in Brussels in a continuing effort to improve ties and lower the risk of hostilities. However, this has been fraught with problems, as the Kremlin has been found to consistently interfere in democratic elections – including the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the deeply consequential Brexit vote – via the usage of mass misinformation to manipulate voters. Russia has also not helped its cause by supporting authoritarian and abusive governments such as the Assad regime in Syria. Furthermore, Russia has also regularly violated the sovereignty of Ukraine through its occupation of Crimea and the Donetsk region on the border between the two countries.

The decision for Russia to pull its NATO mission largely comes in retaliation to NATO's expulsion of 8 Russian officials recently. The group were deemed to be undeclared Russian intelligence officers, and NATO's longstanding concern regarding the Kremlin's aggressive espionage tactics caused the alliance bloc to preemptively limit Russia's diplomatic footprint through the action that it took. In the past, Russia has been credibly accused of committing mass cyberattacks against member states of NATO, including ones on the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Republican National Committee (RNC) servers in the United States, as well as the "Ghostwriter" campaigns in Europe and hackings of the United Nations for intelligence gathering purposes. This pattern of behavior has troubled NATO and caused the group to take bold and strong actions to try and counter the Kremlin's blatant espionage activities.

Ultimately, rising tensions due to Russia's actions against NATO members and other nations have seemingly boiled into the latest development of Russia suspending its diplomatic mission to NATO. While both NATO and Russia have made it clear that they still intend to maintain dialogue and communication, the most recent move by Russia demonstrates the Kremlin's lack of intention to cultivate positive and constructive ties with the West. It remains to be seen exactly what type of impact the decision has on overall regional security, however most analysts contend that at the very least, it has certainly opened the door for potential future hostilities between Russia and its neighbors.