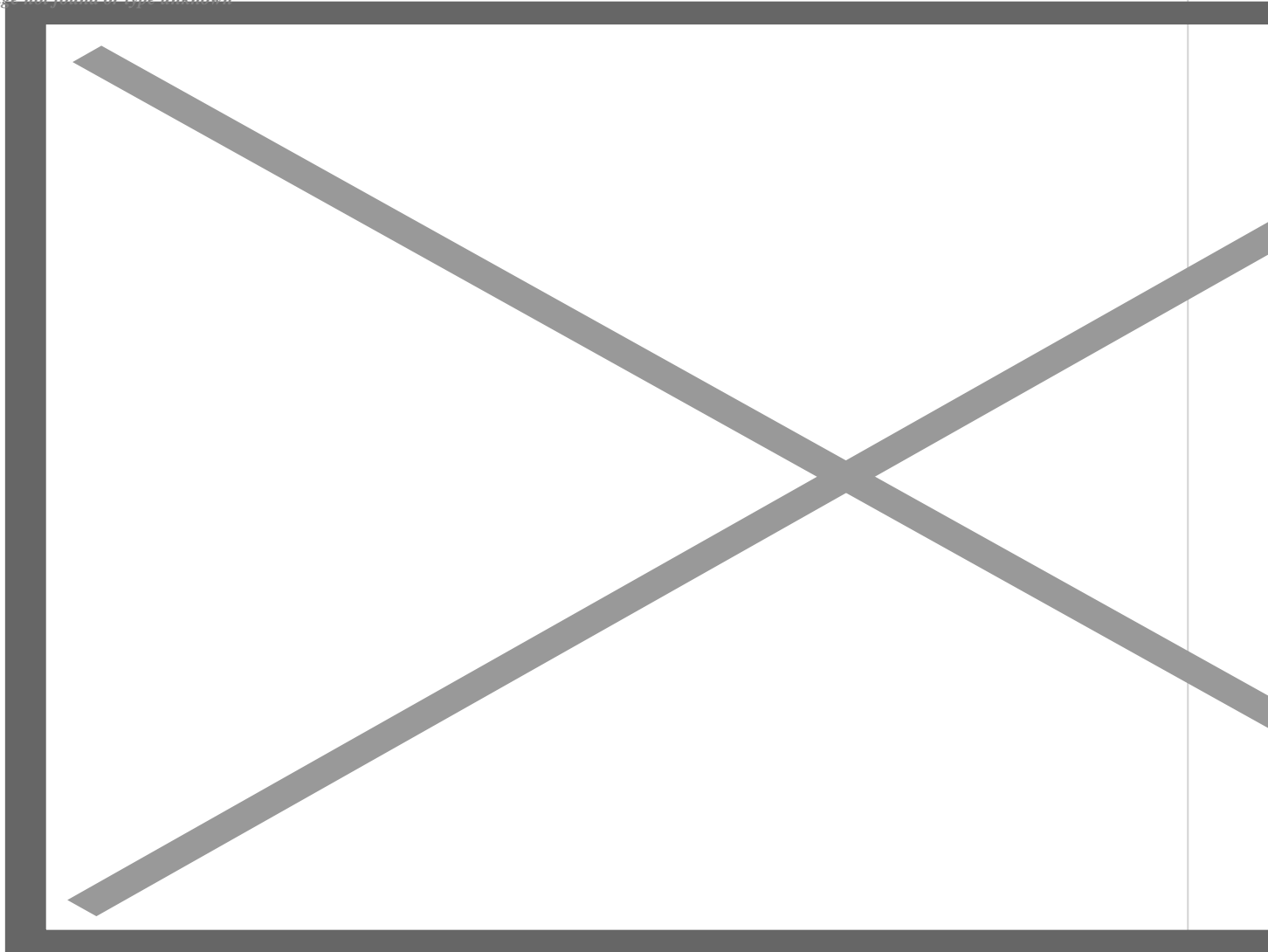


U.S. signs military cooperation agreement with Sweden

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U.S. Army Chief of Staff General James McConville. (File photo)

Washington, October 16 (RHC)-- The United States has signed a military deal with Sweden claiming to protect the Nordic nation's borders, while it awaits official accession to the NATO military alliance.

Swedish top defense official Karl Engelbrektson told local media on Sunday that Washington and Stockholm signed "a strategic agreement" that will serve as a framework for deepening defense

cooperation between the two countries. “Being a good friend to the United States is not wrong when it comes to war,” Engelbrektson said.

Chief of staff of the US Army general James McConville also hailed the military agreement with Sweden saying that Washington is very concerned about possible military action in the Arctic region. He said that Swedish forces are “experts” in such an environment. “They can surely share some expertise with us, and we can show some expertise that we have,” he added.

McConville also noted that the U.S. army “will provide troops and support as directed by our leadership.”

Earlier this year, Sweden and Finland broke with their decades-long neutrality stance and submitted their NATO membership applications to the U.S.-led alliance. The U.S. Senate ratified their entry into the alliance in August. President Joe Biden described the Senate's quick ratification process as a “historic vote.” Biden said in a statement that the senate move “sends an important signal of the sustained, bipartisan US commitment to NATO, and to ensuring our Alliance is prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin, however, said that Moscow would respond if NATO bolsters military infrastructure in the two Nordic states. The Russian leader has on several occasions cited the post-Soviet expansion of the NATO alliance eastwards toward Russia's borders as a reason for the military offensive he declared in Ukraine on February 24. Key to a list of Russian demands from the West prior to the offensive was a guarantee that Kiev would never be part of NATO.

In late September, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also formally applied for a fast-track NATO membership and ruled out talks with President Putin as the war in his country entered its eighth month.

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