

# *Demonstrators Take the Streets to Protest NATO Base Plan in Bulgaria*

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Sofia, February 16 (RHC)-- Bulgarian protesters have demonstrated in the capital Sofia to voice their anger at a government plan to install a NATO military command base inside the country. The protesters marched from the square in front of presidential residence to the parliament on Sunday, calling on the western military alliance "to leave" the country.

The march, formally organized by the Bulgarian Anti-Fascist Union, saw protesters demanding President Rosen Plevneliev to remain neutral in any military action that could be carried out by the alliance and revoke all commitments relating to a "direct or indirect war in Ukraine." They also demanded that the government halt the construction of a new NATO command center.

The protest came after an announcement earlier this month by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg about immediate establishment of command and control units in six eastern European states, including Bulgaria.

The Western military block has over the past year increased its presence and conducted several drills in Eastern Europe amid the crisis in Ukraine. In 2014, NATO forces held some 200 military exercises with

Stoltenberg promising that such maneuvers would continue.

Moscow has repeatedly condemned NATO's exercises and military buildup near Russia's borders.

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