

NATO Opens New Military Post in Lithuania Amid Ukraine Crisis



Brussels, September 4 (RHC)-- NATO has opened a new military command center in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius amid growing tensions between the West and Russia over the issue of Ukraine. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the so-called NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Vilnius on Thursday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg described the move as "a big step forward towards greater solidarity, greater strength, and greater readiness."

According to an official NATO press release, the NFIU in Lithuania is one of the six such units that have been opened this month. The other five are based in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Romania. The NATO units "are part of the Readiness Action Plan, the biggest reinforcement of NATO's collective defense since the end of the Cold War," the press release stated.

During the inaugural event, which was also attended by Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, Stoltenberg said NATO needs to respond to what he referred to as an "assertive" Russia.

Grybauskaitė welcomed the opening of the new military bases in Eastern European countries near the Russian border, saying that the units would ensure the quick movement of NATO forces.

Russia has repeatedly censured NATO's growing war games and military buildup toward its borders.

Kiev and its Western allies accuse the Kremlin of meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs and backing pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine. Moscow, however, has strongly denied such allegations -- saying that it is the United States and its allies that are interfering in the affairs of the region.

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