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Patrick Wintour

Nato members may send troops to Ukraine, warns former alliance chief

Члени НАТО можуть ввести війська до України, - попереджає колишній глава альянсу

Колишній генеральний секретар НАТО Андерс Расмуссен заявив в «The Guardian», що деякі країни Альянсу можуть відправити свої війська на допомогу Україні. А. Расмуссен зазначив, що це може статися у випадку, якщо НАТО не дадуть Києву дієвих гарантій безпеки на саміті у Вільнюсі, який відбудеться у липні. За його словами, надзвичайно важливо, щоб Україні були надані письмові гарантії безпеки, переважно ще до саміту, можливо поза рамками Альянсу. Як пише британська газета, А. Расмуссен, який виступає як офіційний радник Президента України Володимира Зеленського з питань місця України в майбутній архітектурі європейської безпеки, в ці дні здійснює тур Європою та США, щоб оцінити перепади настроїв серед союзників напередодні критично важливого для України саміту, що відкривається 11 липня.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/07/nato-members-may-send-troops-to-ukraine-warns-former-alliance-chief>

Security guarantees and membership path needed at Nato summit to avoid escalation, says Anders Rasmussen

A group of Nato countries may be willing to put troops on the ground in Ukraine if member states including the US do not provide tangible security guarantees to Kyiv at the alliance's summit in Vilnius, the former Nato secretary general Anders Rasmussen has said.

Rasmussen, who has been acting as official adviser to the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on Ukraine's place in a future European security architecture, has been touring Europe and Washington to gauge the shifting mood before the critical summit starts on 11 July.

He also warned that even if a group of states did provide Ukraine with security guarantees, others would not allow the issue of Ukraine's future Nato membership to be kept off the agenda at Vilnius.

He made his remarks as the current Nato chief, Jens Stoltenberg, said the issue of security guarantees would be on the agenda at Vilnius, but added that Nato – under article 5 of the Washington treaty – only provided full-fledged security guarantees to full members.

The US ambassador to Nato, Julianne Smith, said: “We are looking at an array of options to signal that Ukraine is advancing in its relationship with Nato.”

Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg.

France opposed to opening of Nato liaison office in Japan, official says

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Rasmussen said: “If Nato cannot agree on a clear path forward for Ukraine, there is a clear possibility that some countries individually might take action. We know that Poland is very engaged in providing concrete assistance to Ukraine. And I wouldn't exclude the possibility that Poland would engage even stronger in this context on a national basis and be followed by the Baltic states, maybe including the possibility of troops on the ground.

“I think the Poles would seriously consider going in and assemble a coalition of the willing if Ukraine doesn’t get anything in Vilnius. We shouldn’t underestimate the Polish feelings, the Poles feel that for too long western Europe did not listen to their warnings against the true Russian mentality.”

He said it would be entirely legal for Ukraine to seek such military assistance.

His striking suggestion that some states may regard the stakes as momentous enough to use their own troops could be seen as a warning to countries that the risks, including the threat to Nato unity, do not only come if Ukraine is provided a quick path to Nato membership, or powerful security guarantees. Germany remains wary of going too far, fearing it would provoke Russia.

Rasmussen said it was imperative that Ukraine should receive written security guarantees, preferably before the summit, but outside the Nato framework. These need to cover intelligence sharing, joint Ukraine training, enhanced ammunition production, Nato interoperability and a supply of arms sufficient to deter Russia from a further attack.

He said that “after a slow start, momentum was now building behind these ideas”, including in France.

But he warned that security guarantees would not be enough.

He said that “some Nato allies might be in favour of the security guarantees to actually avoid a real discussion on Ukraine’s membership aspirations. They hope that by providing security guarantees, they can avoid this question. I don’t think that is possible. I think the Nato issue will be raised at the summit in Vilnius. I’ve spoken with several eastern European leaders, and there is a group of hardcore, eastern central European allies that want at least a clear path for Ukraine towards Nato membership.”

He said history showed it was dangerous to leave Ukraine in the Nato waiting room indefinitely. Even if an invitation to Ukraine to join Nato could not be provided at the Vilnius summit, the possibility of extending an invitation in Washington next year could be referenced. That path to membership, he said, should exclude setting preconditions such as a Nato membership action plan, something neither Sweden nor Finland have been required to adopt as part of their membership path.

“Anything less than that would be a disappointment to Ukraine,” he said.

He rejected the argument that Ukraine could not be offered a path to Nato membership until the war was over, saying this would provide Putin with a veto.

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