

Are We Heading Unavoidably Straight to War in Europe?!

Description

By **Jonny Tickle**

Last month, Moscow published a draft treaty that would end eastward enlargement of the US-led bloc

Washington will not consider Russian proposals to legally prohibit the eastward expansion of the NATO military bloc, and has no intention of even discussing the idea, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Monday.

Earlier that day, in Geneva, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov spoke for almost eight hours about proposals put forward by Moscow in December for legally binding security guarantees, including prohibitions on weapons placements and restrictions on military exercises. However, one of the key aims for Russia is to get Washington to agree that NATO won't expand further even eastwards and allow Ukraine become a member.

According to Price, American diplomats are happy to accept various reciprocal agreements on missiles and transparency of troop movements.

"We were firm, however, in pushing back on security proposals we have heard from Moscow that are simply non-starters for the United States," he said. "We will not, for example, allow anyone to slam closed NATO's 'Open Door' policy, which has always been central to the NATO alliance."

He also noted that Washington was unwilling to make decisions about Ukraine without Ukraine's input.

"Negotiations on complex topics like arms control can not be completed in a matter of days, or even weeks. We must give diplomacy the time and space required to make progress on such complex issues," he concluded.

A NATO-Russia meeting is planned for Wednesday, in which diplomats will discuss another set of security proposals, pitched by Moscow, also in December. The text delivered to the 30-member bloc last month focuses mainly on the movement of military personnel and material, including a promise that no signatories will station their forces on European states that were not members of NATO in 1997. It also includes a clause that current NATO members renounce any military activity on the territory of Ukraine, as well as in other Eastern European, Transcaucasian, and Central Asian states.

On Monday, following the [meeting](#) in Geneva, Ryabkov told the press that Moscow would not accept anything less than complete assurance from Washington that NATO ends its eastward enlargement.

"For us, it's absolutely mandatory to make sure that Ukraine never, never, ever becomes a member of NATO," he said.

Separately, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov warned his American counterparts on Monday that some form of military response to the US stationing advanced weapons in Europe could

be possible in the future.

He insisted that if NATO proceeds toward the deployment of new capabilities in weaponry, *“which are being developed very rapidly in the US,”* the Russian military may reply in a way that *“will inevitably and unavoidably damage the security of the US and its European allies.”*

Speaking to the media after a day of crucial US-Russian negotiations on security guarantees in Geneva, Ryabkov also said that there has been no progress so far on Russia’s proposals to curb NATO expansion. He said that the ball is now in NATO’s court, which, in his words, has to finally make a *“real step”* toward finding common ground with Russia.

“We are calling on the US to demonstrate a maximum of responsibility at this moment. Risks related to a possible increase of confrontation shouldn’t be underestimated,” Ryabkov said, adding that *“significant”* effort has been made to persuade the Americans that *“playing with fire”* is not in their interests.