

U.S. Will Respond if Russian Actions Trigger NATO Obligations, General Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia's dispatch of troops to Crimea is a threat to ethnic enclaves across Eastern Europe, and the U.S. military will be forced to intervene if its NATO obligations are triggered, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has said.

"If Russia is allowed to do this, which is to say move into a sovereign country under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians in Ukraine, it exposes Eastern Europe to some significant risk because there are ethnic enclaves all over Eastern Europe and the Balkans," General Martin Dempsey said in an interview to PBS television.

There are currently 400,000 Romanians living in Ukraine, Dempsey said, citing the example of Romania, which has been a member of NATO since 2004.

"We do have treaty obligations with our NATO allies. And I have assured them that, if that treaty obligation is triggered, we would respond," he said in the interview on Friday night.

In particular, the obligation Dempsey cited is Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states "that an armed attack against one or more [NATO members] shall be considered an attack against them all." In such a case the alliance is entitled to mobilize in collective self defense. Although, Article 5 has only been invoked once in NATO's history — in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

In response to Russia's deployment in Crimea, the U.S. has sent additional forces to Eastern Europe, including F-15 fighter jets to join air patrols over the Baltic states, and plans to dispatch another dozen of F-16s to Poland this week.

The U.S. has been urging Russia "not to escalate this thing further into Eastern Ukraine and allow the conditions to be set for some kind of resolution in the Crimea," Dempsey said. "But the message we are sending militarily is to our NATO allies."

After Ukraine's pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted from power at the end of February, Russia dispatched troops to Crimea, ostensibly to protect the peninsula's large Russian-speaking population.

Concerns have been mounting that Russian involvement may spread into eastern Ukraine, which is also home to many ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians, some of whom have been calling for closer ties with Moscow.

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