



No imminent nuclear threat from Russia, says new Nato chief

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Mark Rutte is the 14th secretary general of the military alliance

Mark Rutte, the new secretary general of Nato, said he does not see any imminent threat of nuclear weapons being used by Russia despite "reckless and irresponsible" rhetoric by the Kremlin.

Last week, President Vladimir Putin said **Russia was considering changing its military doctrine** to regard an attack from a non-nuclear state - such as Ukraine - that was backed by a nuclear-armed one to be a "joint attack".

Putin's comments came as Ukraine sought approval to use long-range Western missiles against military sites in Russia.

The former Dutch prime minister was speaking at his first press conference since taking over as head of the military alliance.

Rutte said that while he supported Ukraine's right to carry out such strikes, it was up to allies to lift restrictions and called for Nato countries to continue arming Ukraine, saying that "the more we help Ukraine at the moment, the sooner [the war] will end."

"The cost of supporting Ukraine is far, far lower, than the cost we would face if we allow Putin to get his way," Rutte said, reiterating his predecessor's commitment to bringing Ukraine closer to Nato membership.

He acknowledged that the situation on the battlefield in Ukraine - where Russia is making slow but steady progress - was "difficult".

However, Rutte also pointed out that Russia's gains were limited and had come at a high cost, quoting estimates that 1,000 Russian soldiers were being killed or wounded every day.

- What is Nato, which countries are members and when might Ukraine join?

At his first press conference as Nato chief, Rutte said the three priorities for his term as secretary general would be to support Ukraine, to bolster Nato's collective deterrence and to build relationships in other parts of the world, such as the Indo-Pacific.

Nato's European expansion since 1949



Source: Nato



When asked about former US president and current presidential candidate Donald Trump - who had a fractious relationship with Nato - Rutte praised him for persuading more allies to spend more on defence and for highlighting the challenge posed by Russia.

"He was the one pushing us to spend more," Rutte said, and pointed out that Nato member countries currently are at a much higher spending level than when Trump took office in 2017.

He also said that Trump's opponent, Kamala Harris, was a "highly respected leader" and vowed to work with whoever will win the US presidential election next month.

Like his predecessor, Rutte called for Nato countries to spend more and acknowledged that the Netherlands should have reached the target of spending 2% of GDP on defence sooner.

Mark Rutte, 57, was prime minister of the Netherlands until he stepped down earlier this year following the collapse of his coalition government in 2023.

In June, he was appointed as the next secretary general of Nato.

The term normally lasts four years, but Rutte's predecessor, the Norwegian economist and former prime minister Jens Stoltenberg, ended up staying in post for ten years.

Over that decade, Nato went from the "brain death" **French President Emmanuel Macron warned about in 2019** to a revamped military alliance that **now counts Sweden and Finland among its members**.

In a final farewell message before leaving the job on Tuesday, Stoltenberg said that the last ten years had been "momentous".

Wishing Mark Rutte good luck, he said he was sure that Nato was in safe hands.

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Mark Rutte set to be Nato chief as rival drops out
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