

NATO to Up Presence in Eastern Europe Amid Ukraine crisis



Brussels, September 1 (RHC)-- NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is set to upgrade its military readiness at a summit this week to increase its presence in eastern European member states, the alliance Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen says.

The NATO's head told a news conference in Brussels on Monday that the summit in Wales would specially boost NATO's rapid response force, creating a spearhead of "several thousand troops" which could be sent within "very few days" to meet any new threat.

This will "ensure that we have the right forces and the right equipment in the right place, at the right time," Rasmussen said, adding, "That also means a more visible NATO presence in the East for as long as required."

The NATO summit, which will be held on Thursday and Friday, is expected to mainly focus on the crisis in Ukraine. Since Kiev launched military operations to silence the pro-Russia protesters in mid-April, Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking regions

in the country's east have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Moscow forces and the Ukrainian army.

Violence intensified in May after the two flashpoint regions of Donetsk and Luhansk held local referendums, in which their residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence from Ukraine.

Kiev and its Western allies accuse Russia of fueling the crisis in east Ukraine, but Moscow has repeatedly denied the allegations and criticized its Western neighbor for the heavy crackdown on the pro-Russia protesters in the region.



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