



Finland Reverses Course, Says It Will Join NATO Without Sweden

Description

FINLAND: Turkey has said it could approve Finland without Sweden

Finnish officials have said they would join NATO without Sweden if Turkey only approves their membership, reversing their previous position that they would only join together with Stockholm.

The comments came after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Sweden wouldn't receive support from Ankara over a Quran-burning protest that was held in front of the Turkish embassy in Turkey. Erdogan also said Turkey could approve Finland without Sweden.

Finnish Defense Minister Mikko Savola told *The Associated Press* on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Saturday that Finland would prefer to join NATO with Sweden but wouldn't delay its membership if Turkey only approves Helsinki's membership.

"No, no. Then we will join," Savola said when asked if Finland would delay its NATO membership to wait for Sweden. He added that Finland and Sweden cooperate closely, but the issue is in "Turkey's hands now."

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto made similar comments on Friday. "If Turkey approves Finland's NATO application before Sweden's, Finland cannot do anything about it," he said.

The change in position came just two weeks after Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said her country wouldn't join NATO without Sweden. Besides the issues over the Quran-burning protest, Turkey is also seeking far more extraditions from Sweden and has said Stockholm hasn't done enough to fulfill a deal the two Nordic countries signed with Ankara last June.

If Helsinki joins NATO without Stockholm, it would still significantly raise tensions with Moscow as Finland shares an over 800-mile border with Russia, and the Russian military plans to boost its presence in western Russia in response.

by Dave DeCamp

Category

1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Main
3. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

Date Created

02/21/2023