

NATO Border Nations Abandon Landmine Treaty in Shift Towards Deterrence

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Several North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states bordering Russia are taking a decisive step to enhance national defence, with Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland withdrawing from the 1997 Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines. The move, seen by some as controversial, is driven by growing concerns over

Russia's military posture and the need for stronger deterrence capabilities in the region.

Finland officially notified the United Nations (UN) of its decision, which will come into effect in January 2026 following the mandatory six-month notice period. Other NATO countries in the region have already taken similar action, including Poland, which has announced plans to begin large-scale mine production by 2027. Lithuanian Deputy Defence Minister Karolis Aleksa confirmed to *Reuters* that the country plans to begin domestic production next year, stating, "Our national industry will be one of the sources for the production of landmines." He added that the mines would be used for national defence and potentially to assist Ukraine.

The rationale, echoed by multiple defence officials, is that anti-personnel mines serve as an effective and low-cost method of territorial defence, particularly when facing a larger and increasingly aggressive neighbour. Heikki Autto, Chair of Finland's Parliament Defence Committee, described landmines as "highly effective and very cost-efficient." He argued that maintaining a credible stockpile enhances national security and supports broader NATO deterrence strategies.

While humanitarian campaigners have raised concerns, citing the risk to civilians and the long-term cost of mine clearance, NATO nations stress that any deployment would be in strict compliance with wartime rules. Fields would be clearly marked, with post-conflict clean-up protocols firmly in place. Supporters of the decision argue that, given Russia's disregard for international norms, relying on outdated treaties that constrain democratic nations is not only naïve but dangerous.

This shift highlights a growing divide between the West's peace-era expectations and the reality of a more volatile security landscape. These nations are not seeking to escalate tensions but are responding to a clear and present threat with pragmatic measures. While the Labour government in the United Kingdom (UK) continues to delay decisions on modernising national defence, frontline NATO states are choosing readiness over rhetoric.

This renewed emphasis on deterrence should serve as a wake-up call for Western allies. Security in Europe can no longer be taken for granted, and credible defence must come before diplomatic idealism.