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House passes bill preventing Trump from leaving NATO, tells allies to start pulling weight

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23/01/2019



The US House of Representatives has passed a bill to prevent President Donald Trump from withdrawing the country from NATO, but called on European allies to pay their dues – just like Trump has demanded.

The bipartisan NATO Support Act was [passed](#) on Tuesday in a 357-22 vote that reiterated US commitment to the military bloc and [included](#) a provision that rejects any effort made by the president to withdraw from it, banning funding for such actions.

*“It’s crazy that we have to be introducing this bill. But it is, unfortunately, both necessary and urgent,” [said](#) Rep. Tom Malinowski, one of the Democratic co-sponsors of the bill. “I believe it’s necessary that I take the president of the United States seriously. President Trump has made no secret of his disdain for NATO and his willingness to consider leaving it.”*

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On the campaign trail and during his presidency, Trump repeatedly criticized

NATO, saying the organization allowed other members to take advantage of American generosity and enjoy protection it offers without sharing the burden. The US is by far the biggest contributor to the alliance in terms of finances and soldiers carrying out its missions.

Among other NATO allies, few meet the benchmark two percent of GDP that they are required to spend on defense, which is a commitment that all members made. On many occasions, Trump demanded that this slight was addressed.

The new bill makes the same demand, but Rep. Jimmy Panetta, who spearheaded the legislation, insists it is not like those made by the president.

*"What we have to realize is that NATO is not just a transactional relationship," he [said](#), adding that the focus "can't just be on who pays what and who gets what. Being a member of NATO is not like being a member of a country club."*

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In their statements on the bill, several lawmakers stressed NATO's role in defending Europe from 'aggression by Russia.' This perceived threat has been used to justify an increased military presence of NATO troops close to Russia's border and regular exercises on a scale unseen since the Cold War. Russia is responding with additional deployments of troops in the west of the country and exercises of its own.

NATO's uncontrolled expansion eastwards, contrary to verbal assurances made to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, made Moscow increasingly suspicious of the West's actions and caused it to spend a lot of resources modernizing its armed forces and boosting its nuclear deterrence over the past two decades.

This policy is now cited as the reason why NATO is necessary. Retired US four-star general David Petraeus recently called it "the greatest gift" the bloc could receive.

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