

Finland, Sweden and Denmark: Defence Cooperation Agreements with the USA

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Sweden, Finland and Denmark signed bilateral Defence Cooperation Agreements (DCAs) with the United States in December. Under the DCAs, the US Armed Forces have been granted unrestricted access to the military infrastructure (air, sea and land bases) of these countries: 17 locations in Sweden, 15 in Finland and three in Denmark. The three countries have agreed to provide logistical support to the US Armed Forces on their respective territories, and the United States has declared that it will cover the costs of possible development of military infrastructure for its exclusive use. All the three Nordic countries mentioned above have waived their primary right to exercise criminal jurisdiction over US military personnel to the relevant US authorities. The agreements will come into force after they have been ratified in the parliaments of Sweden, Finland and Denmark, a process which is expected to take place in the first quarter of 2024.

Commentary

- The wording of all the three DCAs is, with minor exceptions, virtually identical. Sweden has been negotiating its agreement since January this year, Finland since September 2022, and Denmark since February 2022. As regards the scope of cooperation between these countries and the United States, the biggest differences concern the scale of access to the national military bases offered to US forces. Copenhagen has granted access only to three airbases (Skrydstrup, Karup and Aalborg), while Stockholm and Helsinki have let the US use their air and naval bases, land forces' garrisons, arms and military equipment depots and training grounds all over Sweden and Finland, including in strategically important areas such as Gotland. Thus, the United States will have the opportunity to increase its military presence in all domains throughout the Nordic-Baltic region.
- Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was the direct trigger to start the DCA negotiations in all three Nordic countries. However, each of these countries had a different starting point. Since Finland's accession to NATO in April this year, its status as a close partner of the US has changed to that of a full ally. Meanwhile, Sweden is still waiting for Turkey and Hungary to approve its membership in the Alliance. Stockholm aims to enhance bilateral relations with Washington partly because it wants to strengthen its own security during the transition period. In turn, despite over 70 years of military alliance with the United States and a number of bilateral agreements concluded over this period, Denmark decided to sign a Comprehensive Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US only after

the European security situation deteriorated since 24 February 2022. Copenhagen had pursued a cautious policy regarding the US military presence on its mainland territory during the Cold War, and when this conflict ended there was no need to make this type of cooperation any closer.

- When the DCAs are ratified by the parliaments of Sweden, Finland and Denmark, all the Nordic and Baltic states plus Poland will be parties to bilateral Defence Cooperation Agreements concluded with the US in recent years. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed DCAs with the United States in 2017. For its part, Norway signed a Supplementary Defence Cooperation Agreement (SDCA) with the US in 2021, complementing the previous agreement of 2009 (see '[USA–Norwegia: wzmocniona obecność wojskowa USA na północnej flance NATO](#)'). In turn, Poland signed an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the US in 2020, which complements the 2015 agreement.
- As already mentioned, the agreements concluded over recent years provide the opportunity to significantly increase the US presence in the Nordic-Baltic region. In Norway, the US has gained the right to use the Rygge, Soli and Evenes airbases and the Ramsund naval base. The US can build additional infrastructure for its own needs and deploy its units in all these locations (such as the P-8 maritime patrol aircraft in Evenes). The US Marine Corps, which has equipment depots in Norway (the Marine Corps Prepositioning Program-Norway, MCPP-N) for brigade-sized forces, has also expressed interest in the wider use of military installations in this country. In Poland, infrastructure is being developed under the EDCA at the Wrocław-Strachowice, Łask, Powidz and Kraków-Balice airports, and at the military facilities in Żagań, Skwierzyna, Lubliniec, Drawsko Pomorskie and Poznań; this will allow for the increased activity of US unmanned aerial vehicles, helicopters and transport aircraft, storage of arms and military equipment for an armoured brigade combat team (Army Prepositioned Stocks in Powidz), logistic support and command elements of the US Army's V Corps (Poznań), and the acceptance of US military support in the event of a conflict on NATO's eastern flank.