

## TODAY'S BIG STORY

# New countries ask to join NATO

**Finland and Sweden have handed in applications to become members of NATO. The decision could have a huge impact on the rest of the world.**



**Support:** President Biden says the USA is backing Finland and Sweden.

For weeks, people have been talking. Now, it has happened. Politicians from **Finland** and **Sweden** have **formally** asked to join NATO.

NATO is short for the **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation**. It is a group of countries

which promise to defend each other if they are attacked.

Both countries are **neutral**. This means they do not pick sides or get involved in any wars.

Finland shares a border with Russia just like Ukraine. In the

past, the two countries have got on well. But now lots of **Finns** are worried that an invasion could happen to them too.

Since the invasion, more and more people in Finland and Sweden have wanted to join NATO.

### You decide: Will other countries follow their lead?

#### YES!

The war in Ukraine is showing other countries that being neutral does not always work. Finland decided to join first. Sweden quickly followed. Soon there will be more.

#### NO!

It is not that simple. There are rules to join. A NATO country has to be a democracy. It must spend lots of money on the army. NATO will not grow as quickly as some people think.

## KEY WORDS

**Finland:** A northern country that borders Russia. Its capital is Helsinki.

**Sweden:** A large country in Scandinavia. Its capital is Stockholm.

**Formally:** Something that follows set rules or pattern.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organisation:** NATO was first formed in 1949 after World War Two.

**Neutral:** not favouring either side in a quarrel, contest, or war.

**Finns:** People from Finland.

# Detective zone

## Picture puzzle



Can you work out what this is?

- A newspaper printer
- The inside of a piano
- A loom for making kilts

## Spot the fake!

Only one of these three news stories is true. Which one?

- “New checkouts will let customers pay by smiling”
- “Students break record playing duck, duck, goose for 73 hours”
- “Stonehenge revealed to be only 400 years old”

## Creative challenge

Every country in the world has a flag. So do some states, groups and organisations like NATO. For this activity, design a flag to represent your school.

**Step 1:** Choose the colours and design for your flag.

**Step 2:** Bring it to life using pens, crayons, paper, craft materials – or anything you like!

## Did you know...?

- NATO was formed in 1949
- Its first members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

## Share your genius



Show your work to your class



Send photos of your work to [newsdetectives@theday.co.uk](mailto:newsdetectives@theday.co.uk)

# Teacher notes

## TODAY'S BIG STORY BACKGROUND

# Ukraine war: Sweden and Finland confirm Nato plans in historic shift

**Sweden and Finland have confirmed they will apply for NATO membership in a historic shift that comes as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.**

In Sweden, the governing Social Democrats said they backed joining the Western security alliance, paving the way for the country to apply.

The announcement came soon after Finland formally announced it too would apply to join the grouping.

Russia sees NATO as a security threat and has warned of "consequences". Sweden stayed neutral in World War II and for more than two centuries has avoided joining military alliances.

Finland shares a 1,300-km (810-mile) border with Russia. Until now, it has stayed out of NATO to avoid antagonising its eastern neighbour.

In a statement, Sweden's Social Democrats said they would "work toward" membership, something supported by the public and most opposition parties. A formal application is likely within days.

But the Social Democrats added that they were opposed to stationing nuclear weapons or hosting NATO bases.

At a subsequent press conference, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said her party believed joining the alliance was "best for Sweden's and the Swedish people's security".

"For us Social Democrats, it is clear that the military non-alignment has served



Credit: BBC

Sweden well, but our conclusion is that it won't serve us as well in the future," she added.

She also said Sweden would be left in a "vulnerable position" if it was the only country in the Baltic region that was not a NATO member.

Finland's President Sauli Niinisto earlier confirmed his country would apply, calling it a "historic day".

He spoke to Russia's President Vladimir Putin about the decision, saying he wanted to "say it straight".

"I, or Finland, are not known to sneak around and quietly disappear behind a corner," he said.

Russia's president had previously told Finland it would be a "mistake" to join NATO, which was founded in 1949 to counter the threat from the Soviet Union.

President Putin mentioned Ukraine's intention to join the alliance as one of the reasons for the invasion.

The Social Democrats chose to announce their decision to back NATO membership with a low-key statement. But their decision is monumental, paving the way for Sweden to move away from a position of military neutrality for the first time in two centuries.

The announcement isn't surprising. Social Democrat ministers backed the findings of a cross-party report on Friday which concluded that membership would increase security in northern Europe and would be unlikely to trigger an armed attack from Russia.

Meanwhile public support for formally joining NATO has grown steadily since Russia invaded Ukraine. Most opposition parties are in favour, with just months to go until Sweden's next general election.

## ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

**Picture this!**

A loom for making kilts

**Spot the fake!**

"New checkouts will let customers pay by smiling"

# News Detectives

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