
PM EXPECTS MONTENEGRO TO JOIN NATO "BY MID-2017"

18.03.2016

17.03.2016

B92

The interview has been rebroadcast by Montenegrin national television late on Wednesday.

Asked if he feared that his wish for his country to be stable could worsen relations with Russia, Djukanovic said that Montenegro treated the history of relations with Russia which spanned over three hundred years with respect, but it had the right and was able to choose its own future.

The fact that Montenegro sees its future in the EU and NATO is not directed against anyone, including the Russian partners, Djukanovic said.

Our road to the EU and NATO is in our own interests, but it was not in any way triggered by a desire to do harm to anyone. We are sorry about the way Russia sees our NATO membership bid. We hope it is only temporary and that it is not carrying with it the risk of permanently damaging relations between Montenegro and Russia, said Djukanovic.

"Montenegro has found itself in the line of fire between Russia and the West. We don't think Russia is against Montenegro's membership in NATO because of Montenegro's importance or because of military danger. No. We think Russia is against it because of the worsened relationship with the EU and NATO," he said.

Commenting on his earlier statement about "Russia being behind opposition protests in Montenegro," Djukanovic said that the opposition in his country "has Russian politics' unequivocal support."

He stressed that "disagreements have existed before between the two countries" but that it was "not good if Russia today maintains contact only with those who are the opponents of the Montenegrin state."

He also said that opposition parties in his country are "attempting to present themselves as pro-Russian," but that this was "insincere and mendacious."

Asked "whether he expects members of Russian special forces that participated in the operation of Crimea's annexation to Russia in Montenegro," Djukanovic replied, "I sincerely hope not."

SOURCE: TANJUG

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