

7. 'No other option': Excerpts of Putin's speech declaring war

"Respected citizens of Russia! Dear friends!

"Today, I again consider it necessary to come back to the tragic events taking place in the Donbas and the key issue of ensuring Russian security. Let me start with what I said in my address of February 21. I am referring to what causes us particular concern and anxiety – those fundamental threats against our country that year after year, step by step, are offensively and unceremoniously created by irresponsible politicians in the West.

"I am referring to the expansion of the NATO to the east, moving its military infrastructure closer to Russian borders. It is well known that for 30 years we have persistently and patiently tried to reach an agreement with the leading NATO countries on the principles of equal and inviolable security in Europe. In response to our proposals, we constantly faced either cynical deception and lies, or attempts to pressure and blackmail, while NATO, despite all our protests and concerns, continued to steadily expand. The war machine is moving and, I repeat, it is coming close to our borders."

"After the collapse of the USSR, the realignment of the world began, and the norms of international law that had been developed – the key, basic ones being adopted in the aftermath of World War II and largely consolidating its outcome – began to get in the way of the self-proclaimed winner of the Cold War.

"Of course, in practical life, in international relations and the rules that regulated them, it was necessary to take into account changes in the state of affairs in the world and the balance of power.