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Mark Rutte, the outgoing prime minister of the Netherlands, has been appointed as the next NATO Secretary General. Romania, initially the only NATO member opposing his candidacy, has withdrawn its objection and its candidate, President Klaus Iohannis, paving the way for Rutte’s confirmation.

Rutte is set to replace Jens Stoltenberg, whose term expires on October 1, 2024. He will take over a NATO focused on enhancing its security in light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Rutte has been a significant advocate of military support for Ukraine since the conflict began in 2022.

Despite being a critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Rutte is viewed as a moderate choice, securing support from key allies, including Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. His primary objectives will include maintaining NATO's support for Ukraine and overseeing an upgrade in the alliance's defense capabilities.

During Rutte’s time as Dutch Prime Minister, the Netherlands' defense spending was sometimes below NATO’s 2% GDP target, a point noted by critics. Nonetheless, he is expected to guide the 32-member alliance through upcoming geopolitical challenges, including navigating the results of the next US presidential election.