

Belarus Says Russia Is Sending Warplanes

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will send several warplanes to its military ally Belarus in response to increased NATO activity near the borders of the ex-Soviet republic, the commander of the Belarussian Air Force said Wednesday.

President Alexander Lukashenko had said earlier that Belarus would ask Russia to deploy 12 to 15 warplanes on its territory after the U.S. and Poland began war games that are expected to involve at least 12 U.S. F-16 fighter jets.

Belarus borders Russia, Ukraine and NATO members Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. Further south, a joint exercise of U.S., Bulgarian and Romanian naval forces in the Black Sea started on Wednesday. The drills were planned before the crisis in Ukraine but underscore support for NATO nations near Russia, which has taken control of Ukraine's Crimea region and has warned it could invade to protect Russians there after the president was ousted.

“We reacted calmly until large-scale exercises began ... in Poland,” Lukashenko said. “There is a clear escalation of the situation near our borders.”

He said Belarus would ask Russia to send “no more than 12 to 15 planes,” indicating that the request had been made under a clause of a “union treaty” signed by the two Slavic nations after the Soviet Union’s collapse.

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