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# Poland Plans to Beef Up Military Presence on Eastern Border to Counter Russia

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Polish soldiers take part in the Anaconda-14 joint military exercise of Polish Armed Forces and NATO at a military training area in Orzysz, Poland.

WARSAW — Poland said Tuesday that it is drawing up a long-term plan to shift some of its military strength toward its eastern border, closer to Ukraine and Russia, in response to Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

NATO member Poland is anxious that it could be the next target for Kremlin expansion after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula earlier this year.

"We want to strengthen our units in the east of Poland," Polish Defense Minister Tomasz Siemoniak said on public radio.

"It's a plan that will be spread out over a number of years. The first effects will be seen in 2017. There will be a whole series of initiatives connected to units in the east. There will also

be investments in infrastructure."

He declined to say how many additional troops or units would be involved. Poland has eastern borders with Ukraine, with Moscow-allied Belarus, and also with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, home to the Russian navy's Baltic fleet.

"Obviously this has a link with what is happening in Ukraine," said Siemoniak. "This is a part of the process of drawing conclusions from that crisis."

After the crisis in Ukraine broke out, Poland's government asked its NATO allies to establish a permanent military presence on Polish soil to act as a deterrent to Russia.

The alliance has stopped short of meeting that demand, because some members were wary of the cost and of the risk of antagonizing Russia.

NATO has though intensified training exercises in Poland and plans to create a new rapid reaction force with its headquarters in the western Polish city of Szczecin.

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