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NATO Condemns Russian 'Combat Readiness Drills' as Undermining Stability

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NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has criticised the Russian army's latest round of drills ensuring "combat readiness," the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

Stoltenberg said that the snap checks "undermine transparency and predictability."

"It becomes impossible to ensure effective transparency and monitoring of the exercises," Stoltenberg said, as was quoted by TASS.

Russia's Foreign Ministry maintains that NATO and all military attach?s were informed about the checks.

The drills were ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday, and will continue until June 22.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that the checks were happening to “assess combat and mobilization readiness.”

The day of the first Russian drills was used by NATO defense ministers to announce the deployment of four multinational battalions to Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland on the RBC news website reported. The move was meant to “send a clear signal that NATO stands ready to defend any ally,” RBC said.

Russia-NATO relations worsened considerably following Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict and its annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

Stoltenberg said in his speech that Russia was guilty of violating the ceasefire in Ukraine “again and again,” Reuters reported. He maintained that Moscow was continuing to support separatists with equipment, weapons, and masses of troops along the Ukrainian border.

The general also spoke in support of an aid package to Ukraine which was approved by NATO defense ministers on Wednesday. The package includes consultations and other kinds of assistance, RBC reported.

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