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# Putin Forms Law Enforcement 'Reserve' on Standby for Belarus

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**Yury Kochetkov / EPA / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin has formed a reserve of Russian law enforcement officers standing by to be sent to Belarus, he said in a new interview that aired Thursday.

Putin said he created the reserve at the request of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who faces mass demonstrations in his country weeks after a disputed election he claims to have won in a landslide.

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Russia will not deploy these forces unless "extremist elements in Belarus cross a line and start plundering," Putin said in the interview with the state-run Rossia 24 broadcaster.

"We've agreed that [the reserve] will not be used until the situation starts getting out of

control," Putin said.

On Sunday, Lukashenko and his 15-year-old son were filmed carrying automatic weapons and wearing bulletproof vests while flying to his residential palace as an unprecedented opposition rally took place in central Minsk.

In recent days, he has ordered multiple war games, increased border security and deployed troops in Minsk as a show of force to protesters and foreign powers.

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