

Russia to Withdraw Troops From Ukraine Border, Crimea

The buildup had raised alarms in the West of renewed clashes in eastern Ukraine.

April 22, 2021



Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made the announcement during drills in Crimea. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia will begin withdrawing its military forces from the Ukrainian border starting Friday, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu [announced](#) Thursday, after the buildup had raised alarms in the West of renewed clashes.

Speaking during snap readiness exercises in annexed Crimea, Shoigu ordered the general staff of the armed forces, military chiefs and the airborne troops to begin returning to their home bases from the Russian-Ukrainian border and Crimea starting April 23.

"I believe that the goals of the snap inspection have been fully achieved," Interfax quoted Shoigu as saying. "The troops demonstrated the ability to reliably defend the country."

“In this regard, I have decided to complete the Southern and Western military district reviews,” he added.

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Facing accusations of massing more than 100,000 troops in the region, Russia’s military said it had blocked flights and closed off navigation in parts of the Black Sea and Crimea for drills.

It previously announced some 4,000 maneuvers across Russia’s 11 timezones for so-called “winter period control checks” throughout the month of April.

Shoigu ordered ground forces to return to their bases in Vladikavkaz and Novosibirsk, as well as airborne units to Pskov, Ivanovo and the Krasnodar region, by May 1. The minister ordered military chiefs to “analyze the snap inspections in all levels of management and draw up a plan to eliminate shortcomings,” according to Interfax.

Analysts have cast doubt on theories that Russia was planning a covert invasion of Ukraine with its visible deployment of units, which include warships, modern armor and attack aircraft.

Some observers have characterized Russia’s moves as military posturing, with the Kremlin signaling its escalation capabilities to the new Biden administration while the United States seeks predictable relations with Russia and Ukraine lobbies for more Western support.

Ruble rises

The ruble immediately jumped on the news, climbing 1% against major currencies in Moscow trading. The climb took the ruble to a week-high of 75.7 against the U.S. dollar.

Russian stocks also got a lift, surging 2% to erase three days of losses which had been racked up ahead of Putin's highly-anticipated state of the nation address and pro-Navalny protests Wednesday. Investors will see the pullback as a sign Russia is taking steps to de-escalate the situation in Ukraine — an encouraging sign for Russian markets, which are prone to lurching higher and lower in response to geopolitical developments.

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