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Putin Calls for Boost to Drone Arsenal With AI

By AFP

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Altius-U attack and reconnaissance drones performing its maiden flight. **Russian Defence Ministry / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday told his defense chiefs to work on further developing Russia's arsenal of drones, especially through artificial intelligence.

During a meeting with senior Defense Ministry officials, Putin said the military already had more than 2,000 drones at its disposal.

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"More work must be done on this... in particular through the use of artificial intelligence and the latest scientific and technological advances," he said in remarks released by the Kremlin.

Putin said drones had proven their effectiveness in recent conflicts and that Russia had

developed defenses against their use, including against "terrorist drone attacks" in Syria.

"We have learned how to repel these attacks and are doing it effectively," Putin said.

Drone development is part of a major push for weapons development under Putin, who has made increased Russian military might a cornerstone of his two-decade rule.

A new generation of the Sukhoi stealth fighter jet — dubbed "The Checkmate" — was unveiled earlier this year with the ability to carry and launch drones in flight.

Russia has also taken the lead in developing hypersonic missiles, which can fly more than five times the speed of sound and maneuver in mid-flight, making them hard to track and intercept.

Turkey and Israel have been selling drones in the former Soviet Union and they played a key role Azerbaijan's victory over Armenia in last year's Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Russia last month raised concerns about Ukraine's first drone attack — using a Turkish-made TB2 Bayraktar drone — on pro-Moscow separatists, saying it could "destabilize" the frontline in eastern Ukraine.

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