

Putin Tells Macron U.S. Leading 'Provocative' Exercises in Black Sea

By [AFP](#)

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Russian President Vladimir Putin told French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Monday that "provocative" U.S.-led exercises in the Black Sea were "increasing tensions" between Moscow and NATO, the Kremlin said.

Both leaders expressed "dissatisfaction" with what Moscow called a "worsening" situation in eastern Ukraine, the Kremlin statement said.

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States and its allies in the Black Sea which are increasing tensions between Russia and NATO," the Kremlin said.

Putin's comments came after Western countries raised alarm over Russian military activities near Ukraine.

According to the Elysee, Macron told Putin that France was ready to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity.

Last week, Putin said that the Kremlin considered recent Black Sea exercises by the U.S. and other NATO ships as a serious challenge.

He told state television that Russia's Defense Ministry "had a proposal to hold its own unplanned exercises in the same waters."

"But I believe that this is inappropriate and there is no need to further escalate the situation," he said.

Putin seemingly referred to several U.S. warships taking part in exercises in the Black Sea which Moscow has said it was "monitoring."

According to the Kremlin statement, Putin also criticized Ukraine for the "recent use" of drones in its conflict with pro-Russia rebels.

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Last month, Kiev released footage of what it said was its first use of the Turkish-made TB2 Bayraktar drone against separatists.

Putin said this violates peace agreements signed in Minsk in 2015.

U.S. top diplomat Antony Blinken warned Moscow last week against making another "serious mistake" on Ukraine as Washington sought clarity about troop movements near the border.

The EU has said it was also concerned by Russian military activities close to the border.

The 27-nation bloc said it was monitoring the situation with partners, including the U.S. and Britain.

The accusations come amid rising tensions between the EU and Moscow over a migrant stand-off on the border between Poland and Kremlin-allied Belarus.

In 2014, Moscow annexed Kiev's Crimea peninsula and since then Ukraine has fought a conflict with pro-Russia rebels in the east of the country. The conflict has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

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