

Erdogan Warns Russia Against Invading Ukraine

By [AFP](#)

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. **Gent Shkullalu / AFP**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday warned Russia against invading Ukraine, calling the former Soviet republic a "powerful" country with international friends.

Turkey's supply of combat drones to Ukraine has drawn the wrath of Russia, which fears they could be used by Kyiv in its years-long conflict in two regions of the Moscow-backed separatist east.

Speaking to Turkish reporters in Albania, Erdogan said he intended to discuss the rising tensions with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"You cannot handle these things by saying 'I will invade something, I will take it,'" Turkish media quoted Erdogan as saying.

"I don't see Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a realistic option because it is not an ordinary

country. Ukraine is a powerful country," said Erdogan, who backs Ukraine's NATO aspirations.

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In December, Putin criticized Ukraine for deploying Turkish attack drones, urging Ankara to put pressure on Kyiv not to use the military hardware, which has played a key role in conflicts in Libya and over Azerbaijan's separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey has countered by saying it cannot be held responsible for how the drones are used by countries after they are sold.

Erdogan said he has always opposed Russia's approach to Ukraine, criticizing its 2014 annexation of Crimea.

He added that Russia "should review the state of affairs in the world and its own state of affairs before deciding to take this step" to invade.

"We need to rip war out of political history," Erdogan said.

The West accuses Russia of deploying tanks, artillery, and about 100,000 soldiers across Ukraine's northern and eastern borders in preparation for a possible invasion.

Moscow says it is responding to what it sees as the growing presence of NATO in its sphere of influence, where it fiercely opposes the expansion of the Atlantic alliance.

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