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Russia Sends S-400 Battalions from Far East to Belarus for Drills

January 21, 2022



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Russia is sending two S-400 surface-to-air missile system battalions to Belarus to join military drills there next month, Interfax reported Friday, citing Moscow's Defense Ministry as tensions with the West over neighboring Ukraine continue to escalate.

Russian military forces and hardware began arriving in Belarus days after the two countries announced snap military drills, named United Resolve, to be held in two phases between Jan. 18-Feb. 9 and Feb. 10-20.

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In its statement Friday, Russia's Defense Ministry said that two S-400 battalions were part of the S-400 Triumf combat crew and were being transferred to Belarus by train from the Khabarovsk region of Russia's Far East.

Russia previously said it would also deploy a Pantsir missile system and 12 Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets to Belarus for the drills, which will take place near Belarus's western frontier bordering NATO members Poland and Lithuania as well as near its southern border with Ukraine.

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The drills come as Western states warn that Russia, which has gathered over 100,000 troops on its borders with Ukraine, is preparing an assault on its pro-Western neighbor. On Wednesday, U.S. President Joe Biden said he believed Russia was likely going to invade Ukraine.

Russia has repeatedly denied plans it was planning to launch an invasion into Ukraine but has warned that it will take unspecified "military-technical measures" if the West stonewalls its demands on security guarantees.

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