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Belarus Strongman Says Will Go to War if Russia Attacked

By AFP

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's comments came as part of a speech that lasted three and a half hours. **president.gov.by**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Friday his country would go to war if its key ally Russia was attacked, promising to host "hundreds of thousands" of Russian troops in the event of a conflict.

His remarks come as tensions simmer between Moscow and the West over Ukraine, with fears that Russia is preparing to invade its ex-Soviet neighbor.

In a televised address to the nation, Lukashenko first said his country would go to war if Belarus was attacked.

"The second instance that could lead to a war that Belarus would take part in is if our ally Russia is directly attacked," he said.

"We will stand up to defend our land — our homeland," Lukashenko added, referring to Belarus.

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He said, however, that "there will be no winners in this war" and "everything will be lost."

Russia is the key political and financial ally of Belarus. Moscow stood by Lukashenko in the wake of massive protests against his re-election in 2020 that were violently crushed.

The West has accused Russia of amassing 100,000 troops on the border with Ukraine and has threatened unprecedented sanctions if Moscow invades.

Russia denies any plans to invade but has demanded wide-ranging security guarantees from the West.

Lukashenko warned that he would welcome in the Russian army in Belarus in the event war broke out.

"If there is aggression towards Belarus, there will be hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers here, who together with hundreds of thousands of Belarusians will defend this land," he said in a speech that lasted three and a half hours.

Next month, Belarus and Russia will hold military drills that will focus on a scenario in which Belarus is forced to resist an attack from the West.

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