

Russia Stages Drills in Moldova's Breakaway Transnistria

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Russia has staged military drills in Transnistria, the pro-Moscow separatist region of Moldova, amid Western fears of military actions in neighboring Ukraine, the Russian Defense Ministry [said](#) Tuesday.

The exercises follow Ukraine's warning last month that Russian special services could be preparing "[false flag provocations](#)" against Russian troops stationed in the unrecognized breakaway region to justify a broader invasion of Ukraine.

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The Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) held firefighting training drills at its shooting range in Transnistria against "targets simulating an advancing infantry and enemy military equipment."

“The servicemen practiced covert movement, taking firing positions and improvised disguises,” the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

“Special attention was paid to destroying small targets located at maximum ranges,” it added, saying the Russian troops used Soviet-designed AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers.

The Russian military did not specify how many troops were involved in the “planned” maneuvers.

Transnistria, whose population of 500,000 is one-third ethnically Russian and one-third Moldovan, has sought to join Russia since breaking away from Moldova in 1990.

A small contingent of around 400 Russian peacekeepers is deployed in a demilitarized zone as part of a 1992 Moldovan-Transnistrian-Russian monitoring commission.

Around 1,000 Russian troops are also tasked with guarding ammunition at a decommissioned Transnistrian arms depot, according to media estimates.

The United Nations passed a Moldova-backed resolution in 2018 calling for an immediate and complete withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Transnistria. Moldova’s pro-European President Maia Sandu has called for Russian troops to withdraw from Transnistria since her election in 2020.

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