

Kremlin Says Russian Troops Will Return after Belarus Drills

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Russian-Belarusian military exercises at the Brest training ground. mil.ru

Russian troops will leave Belarus after the end of joint military exercises later this month, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

Russia and Belarus are staging snap drills called “Allied Resolve” near Ukraine’s northern border with advanced missile systems and fighter jets in two phases.

After the combat readiness phase that kicked off on Jan. 18 ends this Wednesday, the active phase of “Allied Resolve” is scheduled to resume on Thursday and end on Feb. 20.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Russian soldiers “will return to their permanent locations” because “we’re talking about allied exercises and of course this is understood.”

"No one has ever said that Russian troops will remain on the territory of Belarus, this has never been discussed," Peskov was quoted as saying by news agencies.

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.

Russia has stepped up military exercises across the country in recent months as the United States has sounded the alarm for months over the buildup of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine.

The Kremlin denies planning to invade Ukraine and defends its troop deployment as movements within its sovereign territory.

In turn, Moscow has sought to extract key security concessions from the United States and NATO, one of which is a Western promise to never admit Ukraine into the U.S.-led alliance.

Kyiv has sought to downplay the “apocalyptic” alarm over Russia’s buildup.

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