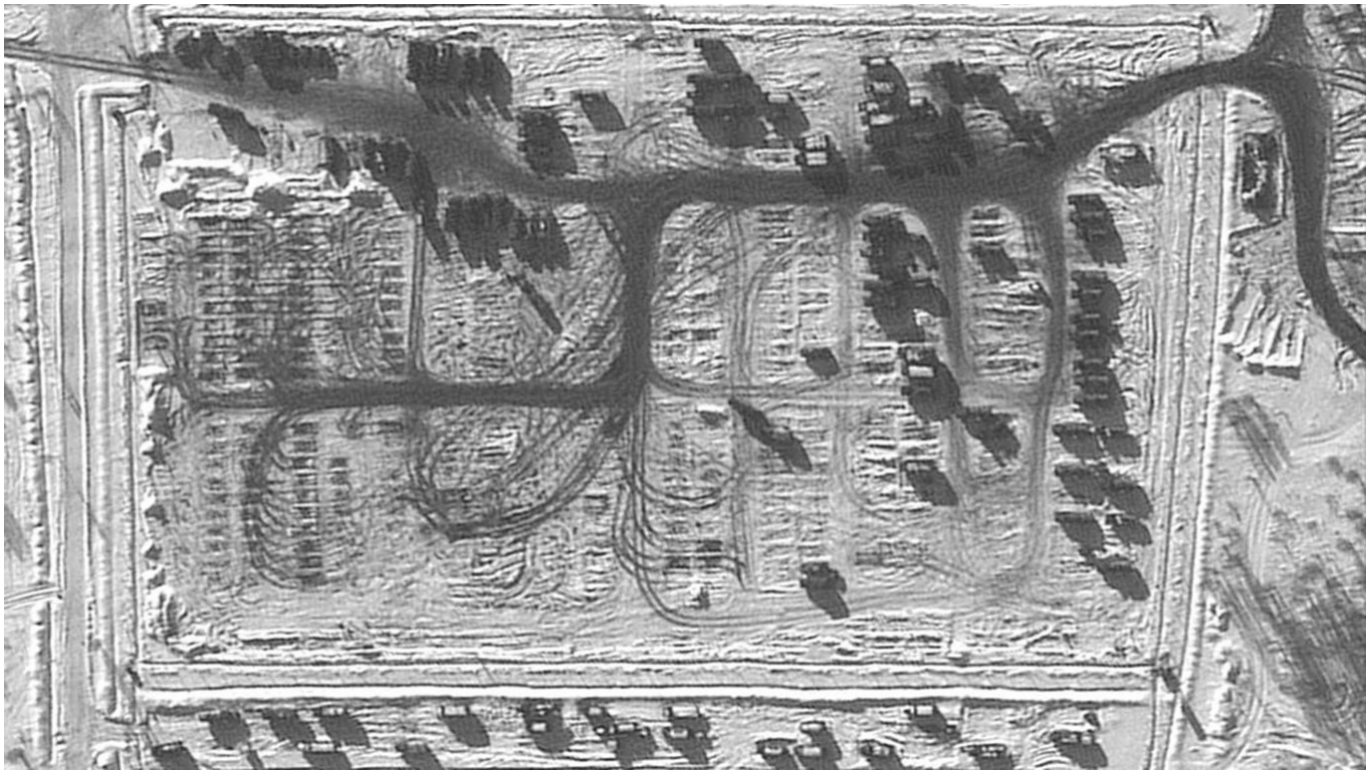
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Satelite Russia Continued to Mass Troops Near Ukraine Over the Weekend, Satellite Images Indicate

The newly released images come as Russian officials hint at a possible de-escalation and begin withdrawing some troops.

February 15, 2022



Overview shows departure of battle group from Yelnya, Russia, Feb. 13, 2022. **Satellite image ©2022 Maxar Technologies**

Russian troops are moving out of staging areas and heading toward combat positions near the border with Ukraine, the U.S.-based technology company Maxar said Monday, citing new satellite images it took.

Russia for months has been massing its troops around Ukraine and on the annexed Crimean peninsula. United States officials say more than 130,000 troops are currently stationed on its pro-Western neighbor's borders, with Washington believing Russia could launch an attack at any time.

“Significant new activity includes the arrival of several large deployments of troop and attack helicopters, new deployments of ground attack aircraft and fighter-bomber jets to forward locations, the departure of multiple ground forces units from existing garrisons along with other combat units seen in convoy formation,” a Maxar representative told the U.S. outlet Navy Time of the images it collected on Sunday and Monday.

Related article: Some Russian Forces Near Ukraine Returning to Bases – Moscow

Russia has always denied having plans to invade Ukraine. Senior Russian officials on Monday said the country is ready to continue dialogue with the U.S. and NATO and is winding down some of the military drills, in what marked a shift in rhetoric since the start of the tensions last year.

On Tuesday morning, the Russian Defense Ministry said some of its forces deployed near Ukraine were beginning to return to their permanent bases.

"Units of the Southern and Western military districts, having completed their tasks, have already begun loading onto rail and road transport and today they will begin moving to their military garrisons," the state-run TASS news agency quoted a Defense Ministry spokesman as saying.

Officials in the West, however, said Russia had continued its military build-up over the last few days.

“Even over the last 24 to 48 hours, over the course of the weekend, Mr. Putin has added military capability along that border with Ukraine and in Belarus,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters Monday.

“He continues to give himself more options, should he pursue a military path here.”

The U.S. on Monday announced it was relocating its embassy in Kyiv to the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, noting a "dramatic acceleration" in the buildup of Russian forces at the country's border.

British officials on Monday evening estimated that an additional 14 Russian battalions were heading toward Ukraine while the British embassy also moved some of its staff to Lviv.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/02/15/russia-continued-to-mass-troops-near-ukraine-over-the-weekend-satellite-images-indicate-a76390