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'Words Good, Acts Even Better': World Reacts to Russia's De-Escalation Signals

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kremlin.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that he was "ready" to work with the West to de-escalate tensions over Ukraine following talks with Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Tuesday.

The statement came hours after Russia announced that it was pulling back some of its 100,000 troops on Ukraine's border to their bases following the end of military drills.

While the moves eased fears that Russia could invade Ukraine at a moment's notice, Western leaders warn that Moscow has yet to significantly draw down its presence near Kyiv's borders.

Here's a look at some of the reactions from around the world:

Russian reactions

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

"The night passed as usual. We slept peacefully. In the morning we started the day calmly and professionally," Peskov said after some Western media reported that Russia planned to invade overnight.

Asked whether the Kremlin had been in contact with representatives from other countries in the early hours of the day, he replied: "We are not used to contact with foreign countries at night."

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova

"Feb. 15, 2022, will go down in history as the day Western war propaganda failed. Humiliated and destroyed without a single shot being fired."

“I'd like to ask if U.S. and British sources of disinformation ... could publish the schedule of our upcoming invasions for the year. I'd like to plan my holidays.”

RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan

“The boss never works on someone else’s schedule. And never does what others tell him to do.”

“[Russia] conducted military exercises — [then] withdrew the troops. [We] showed everyone what we wanted.”

Dmitry Polyanskiy, Russia's deputy ambassador to the UN

"I think [Western countries] need to have a good doctor, I recommend them to do it. Specialist on such paranoia cases."

Ukrainian reactions

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy

"To be honest we react to the reality we have and we don’t see any withdrawal yet. We just heard about it."

"As for the threat, I have said many times that we are calm about any threats because we remember that all this did not start yesterday. This has been happening for many years."

When troops do withdraw, "everyone will see that," he said. "But for now it’s just statements."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba

"We and our allies have managed to prevent Russia from any further escalation.”

"We have a rule: don't believe what you hear, believe what you see. When we see a withdrawal, we will believe in a de-escalation.”

Western reactions

U.S. President Joe Biden

"Analysts indicate that [Russian forces] remain very much in a threatening position. ... The United States is prepared no matter what happens."

"We are ready with diplomacy. And we are ready to respond decisively to a Russian attack on Ukraine, which is still very much a possibility," Biden said, warning of "powerful sanctions."

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg

"We have heard the signs from Moscow about readiness to continue diplomatic efforts, but so far, we have not seen any de-escalation on the ground. ... On the contrary, it appears that Russia continues their military build-up."

"It remains to be seen whether there is a Russian withdrawal. We are of course monitoring very closely what Russia does in and around Ukraine. What we see is that they have increased the number of troops and more troops are on their way."

European Council head Charles Michel

"Russia has signaled that it may be open to diplomacy and we urge Russia to take concrete and tangible steps towards de-escalation because this is the condition for sincere political dialogue. We cannot eternally attempt diplomacy on one side, while the other side is amassing troops."

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen

"NATO has not yet seen signs of any Russian troop reduction. We saw signs of hope yesterday, but now deeds have to follow those words."

British Defense Minister Ben Wallace

"What we haven't seen is evidence of withdrawal that has been claimed by the Kremlin."

"In fact, we've seen continued build-up of things like field hospitals, and strategic weapons systems such as Iskander missiles deployed," he said, adding Britain "will judge them on their actions."

"Until we see a proper de-escalation, I think we should all be cautious about the direction of travel from the Kremlin."

French President Emmanuel Macron

"A week after President Macron's trip (to Moscow and then Kyiv), we see that there is some reason to hope," the French presidency announced.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

"Words are good. We are waiting for acts. If the acts are there then that would be even better."

German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht

"There are signals that at least give us hope. But it is important to observe closely whether these words are followed by deeds."

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

Kishida said he "reiterated my consistent support for the integrity of sovereignty and territory (of Ukraine)" in a phone conversation with Zelenskiy.

AFP contributed reporting.

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