

Kremlin Says Russian Military Withdrawal Will Take Time

By [AFP](#)

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Russian Defense Ministry

The Kremlin said Thursday that Russia's withdrawal of forces from around Ukraine's borders would take place over an extended period, after reports of Moscow's drawdown drew skepticism from Kyiv's allies.

"This is a process that will take some time," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, after Moscow had announced two separate pullbacks following drills that raised fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

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Western countries have accused Russia of building up more than 100,000 troops around ex-

Soviet Ukraine and warned of crippling sanctions if Moscow escalates an ongoing separatist conflict there by moving in troops.

The Kremlin denies planning to invade and has said the troops are taking part in drills. It has also criticized Western officials for commenting on how Russia moves its army on its own territory.

"The Defense Ministry has reported that certain phases of the exercises are coming to an end, and as they do, military units are returning to permanent bases," Peskov said.

He added however that forces "can't just take to the air and all fly away," adding that on the drawdown the Defense Ministry "has a schedule."

Moscow made two separate announcements Thursday it was returning military forces to bases after completing war games that had spurred Western fears of an attack.

NATO, the United States and European leaders have denied, however, that there is any meaningful pullback of Russian troops and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Moscow's military personnel were actually rotating.

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