

Russia Says Withdrawing Military Forces from Near Ukraine

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Russian Defense Ministry

Russia said Friday it was withdrawing more tanks and other armored vehicles from areas near Ukraine's border after running war games that had raised concerns in the West.

"Another military train carrying personnel and military equipment belonging to tank army units of the western military district returned to their permanent bases in the Nizhny Novgorod region after completing scheduled exercises," the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

Separately, it said 10 Su-24 war planes were redeploying from the Moscow-annexed Crimean peninsula to airfields in other regions as part of drills.

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In a later announcement carried by news agencies, the defence ministry said further tank contingents of the western military district were loading onto trains to return to bases after drills.

News agencies did not say where the units had been running drills or where they were being redeployed. Russia has not said how many personnel are participating in large-scale drills near Ukraine's border.

The drawdowns announced Friday are the latest in a series this week that initially spurred hope for a reduction in tensions between Russia and the West over Ukraine.

The West has accused Moscow of massing tens of thousands of troops both on Crimea and near Ukraine's borders and warned of an imminent Russian attack.

In response to the first announcements of the pullbacks however, Washington said there was no meaningful reduction in troop numbers and said Russia was actually increasing forces around the border.

Tensions have been exacerbated by Russian war games in Belarus, whose strongman leader, Alexander Lukashenko, was in Moscow Friday for talks with President Vladimir Putin.

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