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Belarus Says Its Army Not Taking Part in Ukraine Invasion

By AFP

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Belarus's leader Alexander Lukashenko. **president.gov.by**

Belarus's leader Alexander Lukashenko said Thursday that his military is not taking part in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as Kyiv said Moscow's troops were entering the country from Belarusian territory.

"Our armed forces are not taking part in this operation," said Lukashenko, an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Moscow has stationed tens of thousands of troops in Belarus.

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Ukraine's border guards said Thursday their country was coming under artillery attack along its northern border with Russia and Belarus.

Minsk said Putin called Lukashenko in the early hours of Thursday — "at around 5:00 a.m.

(0200 GMT) — to inform him that Moscow was launching a military operation on Ukraine.

After meeting his army chiefs, Lukashenko said Putin had informed him about the "development" of the situation in the call.

He said the Russian leader told him the "aim" of the operation was to "stop the genocide of the people in the Donetsk and Lugansk republics."

He also said he had "personally suggested" to Putin for "a number of the Russian armed forces" to stay in the south of the country despite joint military drills coming to an end.

Putin launched the offensive in the early hours of Thursday, after a surprise televised address.

Russia has tens of thousands of soldiers stationed in Belarus, where it has held military drills.

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