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Putin Tells Reporters Russia Has No Plan to 'Destroy' Ukraine

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Vyacheslav Prokofyev / TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin shed some light on his current state of mind regarding the war in Ukraine at a press conference in the Kazakh capital Astana on Friday.

Among the takeaways from the president's rare Q&A session was the announcement that Russia's "partial" mobilization campaign would be coming to an end in a matter of weeks, and that the Kremlin had already managed to draft 222,000 reservists of an expected 300,000.

"Nothing additional is planned. No proposals have been received from the defense ministry and I don't see any additional need in the foreseeable future," Putin added.

Speaking just days after the Kremlin unleashed multiple missile strikes on Ukrainian cities in what has widely been seen as retaliation for an attack on the Crimean Bridge, Putin played down the possibility of more such attacks in the near future.

"There is no need now for massive strikes. There are other tasks," Putin told reporters, adding with no apparent irony that Russia had not set itself "the goal of destroying Ukraine."

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Russia was "doing everything right" in Ukraine, Putin stressed.

"What is happening today is not pleasant. But all the same [if Russia hadn't attacked in February] we would have been in the same situation, only the conditions would have been worse for us," he said.

However, he did acknowledge that Moscow's former Soviet allies were "worried" about the conflict, but said that this did not affect their relations with the Kremlin "in any way."

When asked about a possible meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden during the upcoming G20 summit in Bali, Putin said he saw "no need" for bilateral talks, while advising reporters to ask Biden directly whether he was ready to hold a meeting.

Putin added that his personal attendance of the G20 summit next month remained uncertain. "Russia will certainly take part. As for the format, we're still thinking about it."

AFP contributed reporting.

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