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Putin Oversees Routine Strategic Nuclear Deterrence Drills

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President Vladimir Putin during training drills by Russia's strategic deterrence forces. **kremlin.ru**

President Vladimir Putin oversaw training exercises of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrence forces on Wednesday, the Kremlin said.

State television aired footage of Putin overseeing the drills in the Barents Sea in the Arctic and the Kamchatka peninsula in the Far East from a control room.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told Putin in televised remarks that the drills simulated “a massive nuclear strike in response to an enemy nuclear attack.”

"Under the leadership of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Vladimir Putin, a training session was held with ground, sea and air strategic deterrence forces, during which practical launches of ballistic and cruise missiles took place," the Kremlin said in a statement.

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The drills, which take place annually, are the second such exercise this year, with the previous drills taking place five days before Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

The United States said Tuesday that Moscow had informed it of the routine drills in advance.

According to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, two types of nuclear missiles — the Yars intercontinental ballistic missile and the Sineva ballistic missile — were fired.

The exercises also involved Tu-95 long-rage aircraft.

"The tasks envisaged during the training of strategic deterrence forces have been completed in full, all missiles have reached their targets," RIA Novosti quoted the Kremlin as saying.

Putin also on Wednesday reiterated Moscow's widely criticized claims that Ukraine is preparing a provocation against Russia using a "dirty bomb."

"The desire to get nuclear weapons has been stated publicly by the authorities in Kiyv," Putin said at a meeting with the heads of special services of CIS countries. "It is also known about the plans to use the so-called 'dirty bomb' as a provocation."

Shoigu has discussed the accusation in phone calls with his counterparts in France, the U.K., the U.S., China and India in the past several days.

Ukraine and its Western allies have dismissed the claim, warning that Russia could be preparing to detonate a "dirty bomb" — a conventional munition laced with radioactive material — on occupied Ukrainian lands and create a pretext to retaliate against Kyiv.

AFP contributed reporting.

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