

Belgorod Region Governor Announces Creation of Territorial Defense Units

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Belgorod Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Tuesday that the border region is forming self-defense units amid Russia's ongoing war with neighboring Ukraine.

“Literally from the very first days of the beginning of the special military operation, a large number of residents of the Belgorod region addressed the need to begin training and forming territorial defense or self-defense detachments, [therefore] we have made this decision,” Gladkov wrote on his Telegram channel on Tuesday.

According to Gladkov, whose region was used as a launchpad for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, several battalions made up of local residents are being formed, many of whom were not able to join Russia's Armed Forces.

“We are forming several battalions of those who, for health reasons or within the age limits, cannot be called up to the armed forces, but have combat experience and a great desire, if necessary, to stand up for their native land and family,” Gladkov said.

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The creation of self-defense units in Belgorod reflects how the small border region has been increasingly dragged into Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The region has been shelled since the start of Moscow's war in February, with military facilities across the region being frequently targeted.

"Tanks, planes, armored personnel carriers — I saw all this for two or three days on the territory of Shebekino. It's getting scary," one Belgorod resident told the BBC in October.

"We are already seriously considering options for moving inland," the resident added.

Last month, Gladkov shared an image of rows of trenches being dug across the region, as well as small concrete pyramids being placed alongside key roads.

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