Russian Military Reforms Target NATO Expansion, 'Collective West' – Gerasimov

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Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov **Vadim Savitsky / Russian Defense Ministry Press Office / TASS**

Russia's recently announced military reforms are a response to NATO's likely expansion and the "collective West" using Ukraine in a hybrid war against Moscow, the new head of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine has said.

Since announcing a major overhaul last month, the Russian military last week said it would implement major changes to its Armed Forces between 2023-26.

In his first public remarks since his appointment as Russia's top commander in Ukraine earlier in January, General Valery Gerasimov said the reforms were driven by events that followed Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine.

"Today, the new threats are NATO's aspirations to expand at the expense of Finland and Sweden, as well as the use of Ukraine as a tool for hybrid warfare against our country," he said.

"Modern Russia has not yet known such a level and intensity of military operations," Gerasimov said in an interview with the Argumenti i Fakty newspaper late Monday.

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Claiming that the Russian Armed Forces "are now countered by virtually the entire collective West," Gerasimov listed the reforms that his superior, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, outlined last Tuesday.

These include adding an army corps to northern Russia's republic of Karelia; reverting to the Soviet-era practice of having two military districts — Moscow and Leningrad — in northwestern Russia; and placing three motorized rifle divisions in southern Ukraine's Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, which Moscow illegally claimed to have annexed last fall.

"The main goal of this work is to ensure the guaranteed protection of our country's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Gerasimov said.

Army Chief of Staff Gerasimov was placed in charge of Russia's forces in Ukraine on Jan. 11, replacing his predecessor who had overseen a campaign of drone and missile attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure and the withdrawal from the southern city of Kherson.

Russia has repeatedly justified its war on Ukraine by claiming it seeks to counter an existential threat from U.S.-led military bloc NATO.

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