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Russia and Belarus Sign Document on Tactical Nuclear Weapon Deployment

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Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin. **Russian Defence Ministry**

The defense ministers of Russia and Belarus on Thursday signed a document on the deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory, the state-run TASS news agency reported, citing the Defense Ministry of Belarus.

Russia will retain control over its non-strategic nuclear weapons stationed in neighboring Belarus, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said at a document-signing event with his Belarusian counterpart Viktor Khrenin in Minsk.

"Russia will not transfer nuclear weapons to the Republic of Belarus: control over them and the decision to use them remains with the Russian side," he said.

Shoigu also noted that "additional measures may be taken to ensure the security of the Union State [of Russia and Belarus] and respond to the military-political situation," which he insisted will "comply with all existing international legal obligations."

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On March 25, President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, describing the decision as “nothing unusual.”

The move has been met with widespread backlash by the West, with the EU threatening new sanctions on Belarus should Minsk agree to host Russian nuclear weapons.

Minsk contends that it feels compelled to host Russian nuclear weapons after "unprecedented" Western pressure, insisting their deployment did not violate international agreements.

Belarus is Russia's closest ally among former Soviet countries. While Minsk allowed Moscow's troops to invade Ukraine via its territory in February 2022, it says its own army has not been directly involved in hostilities.

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