

Belarus Holds Training Drills With Wagner Mercenaries

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A soldier participating in the joint four-day military exercises. **Ministry of Defense of Belarus**

The armed forces of Belarus on Thursday began the first publicly known training drills with Russia's exiled Wagner fighters.

Video shared by the Belarusian Defense Ministry showed members of its Special Operations Forces and masked men in military fatigues with Wagner patches performing combat tasks at a training facility.

"We're trying to absorb everything like a sponge, to analyze and deploy [Wagner's training] in practice in the future," an unnamed Belarusian soldier was quoted as saying in a Defense Ministry statement.

The four-day exercises are taking place at military training grounds in Brest, around three kilometers from Belarus' western border with Poland, a member of both NATO and the EU.

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Poland's Defense Ministry, which has moved more than 1,000 soldiers to its eastern border amid reports of Wagner's deployment in Belarus, [said](#) Thursday it was "ready for any scenario."

The Kremlin said it was concerned about the Polish military's "hostile" reinforcements near the border with Belarus.

Belarus' Defense Ministry said the training exercises with Wagner were aimed at improving the country's military security "in the current geopolitical situation."

Belarus, a close ally of Moscow, served as a staging ground for Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has described Wagner's combat experience in Ukraine — which culminated in the costly capture of Bakhmut — as "invaluable."

Lukashenko arranged last month for Wagner's exile in Belarus in exchange for the Kremlin dropping criminal mutiny charges against its founder Yevgeny Prigozhin.

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