The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Withdraws Military Contingent From Allied Belarus

September 08, 2023



Joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises. **Belta**

The Russian military has withdrawn a regional task force from neighboring Belarus, Ukrainian border authorities and independent Belarusian war monitors have said.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko announced in October 2022 the deployment of a joint regional group of military forces after accusing Ukraine of preparing an attack on his country.

On Thursday, the State Border Service of Ukraine said "almost all" of Russia's forces in Belarus have been "rotated out."

"No new units have been brought in," spokesperson Andrii Demchenko said at a press briefing, adding that current Russian troop numbers in Belarus pose no immediate threat of invading Ukraine from the north.

Related article: Belarus Leader Slams 'Stupid' Polish, Baltic Calls for Wagner Withdrawal

Russian personnel completely withdrew from Belarus in early July, while the entire aviation group followed in early August, according to the Belarusian war monitoring project Belarussky Hajun.

The war monitor listed 11 attack and transport helicopters as well as nine fighter jets among those that had returned to their home airfields in Russia.

Around 2,500 fighters for the Wagner mercenary outfit, which had agreed to be stationed in Belarus after staging a failed mutiny this summer, still appear to be stationed in Belarus, according to Russia's investigative outlet iStories.

Russia's Defense Ministry has not commented on the reported withdrawal of its troops.

A longtime ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko has faced accusations of facilitating Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine by allowing Russian forces to group and launch attacks from Belarusian territory.

Belarus has provided logistical support to Russia's military, especially in the first weeks of the war, although it officially remains a non-belligerent in the conflict.

Like Russia, Belarus has been targeted by Western sanctions aimed at Russia over its assault on Ukraine.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/09/08/russia-withdraws-military-contingent-from-allied-belarus-a82405