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Belarus Says Poland Forcing Back Migrants from Border

By AFP

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Border guards patrol along the border wall at Polish - Belarus border not far from Bialowieza. **Wojtek Radwanski / AFP**

Belarus on Monday accused Poland of firing warning shots and using tear gas and physical force to push back migrants trying to enter the European Union through their volatile border.

Ties between Minsk and Warsaw, frozen for years, hit new lows after Belarus strongman Alexander Lukashenko allowed Russia to use his country to attack Ukraine, which Poland backs.

The Belarusian border service said Polish guards routinely use "violence and abuse" to turn away refugees, including using tear gas and physical force.

"Recently, there have been several cases when Polish soldiers took foreigners to the fence on the border with Belarus and then forced them out through the animal wicket," a statement

said.

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"At the same time, in order to intimidate people, Polish law enforcers pointed their weapons at the refugees and fired several shots over their heads."

Minsk said the use of firearms was "extremely dangerous" and could spark a border conflict.

Earlier this month, Belarus said a Polish aircraft had breached its airspace and summoned the Polish charge d'affaires over the incident. Poland described the allegations as "lies."

Warsaw, a NATO member and staunch ally of Ukraine, has recently voiced concern over the relocation of Russian mercenaries to Belarus after their failed insurrection in June.

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