The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Spy Chief Claims France Planning to Send 2K Soldiers to Ukraine

March 19, 2024



Sergei Naryshkin. **Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

Russia has intelligence that France is gearing up to send 2,000 of its soldiers to Ukraine, the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Sergei Naryshkin said Tuesday.

"[The French soldiers] will become a legitimate priority target for attacks by the Russian Armed Forces," Naryshkin said, according to a statement published on the SVR's website.

"The sword awaits all Frenchmen who ever enter the territory of the Russian World," he added.

Naryshkin's uncorroborated claims came on the same day that General Pierre Schill, chief of staff of the French land forces, said the French army stood ready for "the toughest engagements."

Schill did not specifically refer to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the risk of the conflict spreading, but he did say "the sources of crisis are multiplying and carry with them

risks of spiraling or extending."

Related article: France Blames Bedbug Panic on Russian Disinfo

Schill's statement comes after French President Emmanuel Macron refused in February to rule out deploying ground troops to help Ukraine fight Russia.

Macron's stance toward Russian President Vladimir Putin has been hardening, and the French leader recently described Putin as a threat not just to Ukraine but to the security of all Europeans.

Schill said France could assemble a division of 20,000 troops in a coalition within 30 days and command an army of around 60,000 soldiers by joining other allied nations.

The French army says it has 121,000 soldiers and can call up 24,000 reservists.

Naryshkin claimed 2,000 French troops would be deployed to Ukraine in the "initial stage" of a wider mission.

"The French military fears that such a large unit will not be able to be transferred and stationed in Ukraine unnoticed," he said without elaborating.

AFP contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/03/19/russian-spy-chief-claims-france-planning-to-send-2k-soldiers-to-ukraine-a84537