

Russia Says Preparing Non-Strategic Nuclear Strike Drills

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A row of air bombs. **Grigory Sysoyev / TASS**

Updated with Peskov's remarks.

Russia's Defense Ministry [announced](#) Monday that its forces were preparing to conduct tactical nuclear weapons exercises in response to Western "threats and provocations."

"At the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, in order to increase the readiness of non-strategic nuclear forces to perform combat missions, the General Staff has begun preparations for conducting exercises in the near future," the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

It added that the exercises would involve missile units of Russia's Southern Military District, which is headquartered in the city of Rostov-on-Don, as well as aviation and naval forces.

"During the exercise, a set of measures will be carried out to practice the issues of preparation and use of non-strategic nuclear weapons," the statement read.

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According to the Defense Ministry, the exercises seek to maintain the readiness of personnel and equipment amid “provocative statements and threats by certain Western officials against the Russian Federation.” It did not say when the nuclear weapons exercises were scheduled to take place.

President Vladimir Putin placed Russia’s nuclear forces on [high alert](#) days after ordering Russian troops to invade Ukraine in February 2022.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov later on Monday [linked](#) the drills with what he described as Western announcements to send troops to Ukraine.

In an interview with The Economist last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said the question of sending Western troops to Ukraine would "legitimately" arise if Russia broke through Ukrainian front lines and Kyiv made such a request.

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