

Putin and Lukashenko Arrive in Volgograd for WWII Commemorations

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Vladimir Putin and Alexander Lukashenko on the Mamaev Kurgan in Volgograd. **Vladimir Smirnov / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko arrived in the southern Russian city of Volgograd on Tuesday for World War II commemorations.

The two heads of state [laid flowers](#) at the Stalingrad memorial complex at the start of the visit, after which they [addressed](#) a Russian-Belarusian parliamentary forum, called “Great Heritage — Common Future,” dedicated to the legacy of the war.

“We share the exact same idea: one Fatherland stretching from Brest to Vladivostok. It so happened that two states emerged here, but we must do everything to ensure that our ties within this Fatherland are even closer than in a unitary state,” Lukashenko [said](#) at the forum.

Russia and Belarus signed a “Union State” deal in 1999 to ensure the cross-border flow of labor, capital and goods. In February 2022, Lukashenko allowed Russian troops to use his country as a staging ground for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The two allies have since expanded to military cooperation, with a mutual defense pact signed in December 2024 that formalizes Belarus' alliance with nuclear-armed Russia as a deterrent against foreign aggression.

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After the parliamentary forum on Tuesday, Lukashenko and Putin held separate discussions about their countries' strategic partnership. At that meeting, the two leaders [agreed](#) to build a joint aircraft manufacturing plant.

“We are ready to lay the foundation of a plant together with your specialists, a corresponding laboratory for drones,” Putin told his Belarusian counterpart during the meeting.

Volgograd, known as Stalingrad between 1925 and 1961, is the site of a major battle that shifted momentum in favor of Soviet troops when they defeated Nazi soldiers in the bloodiest fighting of the war in 1943.

In 2013, lawmakers in the city voted to revive the name Stalingrad for ceremonial purposes six days a year. This year, Russia's civil aviation authority [announced](#) that the airport in Volgograd would be renamed Stalingrad International Airport during navigation calls between May 8 and May 10.

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