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Russia Seeks to Deploy 10K More Troops to Moldovan Breakaway Region, PM Says

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Government of Transnistria

Russia hopes to deploy as many as 10,000 more troops to the breakaway Moldovan region of Transnistria, Moldova's Prime Minister Dorin Recean told the Financial Times, citing intelligence assessments.

In his interview with the FT published on Wednesday, Recean accused Moscow of interfering in Moldova's upcoming parliamentary elections in order to install a Kremlin-friendly government that would allow more Russian troops in Transnistria.

"This is a huge effort to undermine Moldovan democracy," Recean told the FT. "They want to consolidate their military presence in the Transnistrian region."

"You can imagine with 10,000 troops, what the leverage and pressure would be on the southwestern part of Ukraine," he said. "But also close to Romania, which is a NATO member

state."

According to Recean, Russia spent the equivalent of 1% of Moldova's GDP on influence campaigns in 2024, when the country held a presidential election and a referendum on joining the European Union that passed with a razor-thin margin.

"We're very cautious because their propaganda, their communication mechanisms are very powerful. They are spending a lot of money," Recean told the FT.

"Correspondingly, we have to step up our defenses as well. But we also have to deliver on our agenda" of becoming an EU member, the government's main priority, he said.

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Russia maintains a modest military footprint in Transnistria, a narrow strip of land along Moldova's eastern border that has been controlled by pro-Russian separatists since the early 1990s.

Moldova, a former Soviet republic of 2.5 million people, has repeatedly demanded that Russia withdraw its forces from Transnistria, a demand backed by a 2018 UN resolution that Moscow has ignored.

Landlocked Transnistria is surrounded by Moldova and Ukraine, meaning that any substantial reinforcement by Russia would likely require a land corridor — a strategic goal that some Russian military commanders openly discussed in the early days of the Ukraine invasion.

In February 2024, authorities in the Transnistrian capital Tiraspol appealed to Russia for "protection," mirroring rhetoric used by Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine in the lead-up to Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has also warned that Moldova could become "the next Ukraine," accusing President Maia Sandu of "rushing" to join NATO and saying that Russia would not allow its 220,000 citizens living in Transnistria to become "victims of another Western adventure."

An investigation by the Dossier Center, a Russian opposition-linked investigative group, reported that early in the Ukraine war, the Kremlin instructed the Federal Security Service (FSB) to examine scenarios for opening a "second front" via Transnistria. The Washington Post confirmed similar information through its own sources.

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