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Putin Spotlights Nuclear Triad, Awards Officers on Defender of the Fatherland Day

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President Vladimir Putin marked Defender of the Fatherland Day by promising to improve Russia's nuclear triad and handing out state awards to officers involved in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The development of the nuclear triad, which guarantees Russia's security and ensures effective strategic deterrence and a balance of forces in the world, remains an absolute priority," Putin said in a midnight video message.

He spoke after the last remaining nuclear treaty with the U.S. — New START — expired earlier this month. Moscow has said it would continue taking a "responsible" approach to strategic nuclear capability and respecting the limits set on its arsenal.

Later in the day, Putin presented state awards to officers of the Russian military and National

Guard.

The Kremlin's website listed the names of nine Russian officers who were awarded the title of Hero of Russia, and Putin also presented Order of Courage awards to a National Guard colonel and lieutenant colonel.

"Your skillful and courageous actions, personal bravery and determination have contributed to the careful planning and successful execution of our troops' offensive operations in the most difficult areas," Putin said, a day before the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

After the ceremony, Putin laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Alexander Garden near the main entrance to Red Square.

In the afternoon, Putin met a handful of widows of Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine to hear their comments about state measures "to help you and your children get back on your feet."

AFP contributed reporting.

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