

Russia's Ukraine Buildup Enters Its Most Dangerous Stage Yet

Нарощування військ Росії в Україні вступає в найнебезпечнішу стадію

. У спільних російсько-білоруських військових навчаннях, які розпочалися в Білорусі, за оцінками беруть участь 30 тис. військовослужбовців, що зробить навчання найбільшими з часів холодної війни. Росія також розпочала навчання біля узбережжя Чорного та Азовського морів України, що спонукало міністра оборони України О. Резнікова звинуватити Москву в блокуванні доступу України до міжнародних вод.

<https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/russias-ukraine-buildup-enters-its-most-dangerous-stage-yet/>

The joint Russian–Belarusian military exercises that began in Belarus today are estimated to involve 30,000 troops, which the Wall Street Journal reports would make the exercises the largest since the Cold War. That, taken with a suite of other recent Russian actions, is setting off alarm bells in Western capitals — for good reason.

The Russian navy has also started to conduct exercises off Ukraine's Black Sea and Sea of Azov coasts, prompting Ukrainian defense minister Oleksiy Reznikov to accuse Moscow of blocking his country's access to international waters and order the forces under his control to conduct exercises. Meanwhile, the U.S. embassy in Kyiv stopped just short of calling Russia's naval activities surrounding Ukraine a blockade in a pointed tweet.

BuzzFeed News has an excellent analysis on the situation, from its correspondent in Kyiv, which features analysis from a former Ukrainian defense minister:

"It appears they are deploying troops to man equipment prepositioned near the border, and they are moving equipment from the big assembly areas to staging points closer to the border," tweeted Rob Lee, an analyst with King's College London's Department of War Studies. "The Russian military, as of this week/weekend, has the military capabilities to actually conduct a large-scale invasion. So an invasion could occur on days or hours notice." Andriy Zagorodnyuk, the former defense minister of Ukraine, told BuzzFeed News that he doubted Russia would launch a full-scale invasion. His words echoed those of Zelensky and other Ukrainian officials, and illustrated the gap between messages in Kyiv and Washington that in the past two weeks has been the cause of some strain between the two. "Aiming to occupy the country or half of the country, is currently, totally unrealistic," he said. "They don't have enough forces close to what they need for that." But Russia does have what it needs to conduct targeted military operations in Ukraine, he conceded. BuzzFeed also obtained satellite imagery showing that Russian forces are moving military equipment closer to Ukraine's border. The exercises in Belarus end in ten days, and experts are saying that Russia's military buildup has entered its most dangerous stage. Washington's reaction reflects that sense of urgency, with officials from President Biden on down telling Americans in Ukraine to leave immediately. Biden made that recommendation in an interview with NBC's Lester Holt this evening, also saying there's no situation in which he

would send U.S. forces to Ukraine to evacuate stranded U.S. citizens: "That's a world war when Americans and Russia start shooting at one another."