

Belarus Says 'Not a Single' Russian Soldier Will Stay After Joint Drills

By [AFP](#)

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Belarus's foreign minister Vladimir Makei. president.gov.by

Belarus's foreign minister Vladimir Makei said Wednesday that "not a single" Russian soldier will remain in the country after the massive joint maneuvers by Minsk and Moscow on Ukraine's border end.

"Not a single (Russian) soldier or a single unit of military equipment will stay on the territory of Belarus after the drills with Russia," Makei told a press conference in the capital Minsk.

He said the defense ministry and long-time President Alexander Lukashenko had made this clear.

Russia this week announced an end to some military drills near Ukraine's borders, including those in Belarus.

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But the West remains fearful of a possible attack on Ukraine, saying it has yet to see evidence of real de-escalation.

NATO has called Russia's drills in Belarus particularly alarming, saying they marked a "dangerous" moment for Europe.

Makei hailed a phone call between Ukraine's and Belarus's defense ministers this week as "positive," saying it had helped to "ease tensions."

Minsk had told Kyiv that "what is happening on the border does not mean that someone is planning to carry out an act of aggression."

"Neither Moscow, nor Minsk, nor Kyiv" wants war, he said.

Kyiv had also called the defense call as positive.

Ukraine's defense minister said Wednesday that Kyiv's military attache had visited the exercises in Belarus the day before, and that the Belarusian attache would attend drills in Western Ukraine on Wednesday.

Belarus, ruled by Lukashenko since 1994, borders both Ukraine and Russia.

Increasingly isolated after violently suppressing mass protests in 2020, Lukashenko has become more dependent on his bigger Russian neighbor for support.

Minsk has often tread a fine line in disputes between Kyiv and Moscow.

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