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# Putin vows to bolster Russia's nuclear triad

The strategic arsenal ensures “deterrence and global balance of power,” the president has said



Russian President Vladimir Putin. © Sputnik/Kristina Solovyova

Russia will continue to improve its military and technological capabilities, and the nuclear triad is an “*unconditional priority*” in this regard, President Vladimir Putin has said.

Putin made the remarks on Monday in a video address marking Defender of the Fatherland Day, as he praised service members for their dedication to defending national sovereignty, particularly amid the military operation against Kiev.

The Russian president pledged to strengthen the army and navy using combat experience from

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the Ukraine conflict, and boost combat readiness across all military branches with the help of Russia's science and high-tech industries.

*"The development of the nuclear triad, which guarantees Russia's security and enables us to effectively ensure strategic deterrence and balance of power in the world, remains our unconditional priority,"* he said.

The address came less than a month after the expiration of the New START Treaty – the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between Russia and the US. The deal, signed in 2010, limited both sides to 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads on 700 delivery systems and required regular on-site inspections.

Despite the expiration of the treaty, Moscow stressed that it has no intention of being *"the first to take steps towards escalation"* and increasing the number of warheads, on condition that the US takes the same approach.

The New START Treaty expired after the administration of US President Donald Trump signaled that it wants future nuclear arms control deals to include China – which has rejected the idea as *"neither fair nor reasonable,"* arguing that its arsenal is vastly inferior to that of Russia and the US.



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# Russia will respond if Estonia hosts NATO nukes – Kremlin

Moscow is not threatening the Baltic state, but will aim its nuclear weapons at it if NATO nukes are deployed there, Dmitry Peskov has said



FILE PHOTO. © Sputnik / Natalya Seliverstova

Russia will aim its nuclear weapons at Estonia if NATO nukes are deployed there, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said, after the Baltic nation's foreign minister stated that Tallinn would not be opposed to hosting nuclear weapons.

European members of the US-led bloc have discussed expanding their nuclear deterrence as part of a massive military buildup, which has been justified by what Western officials describe as the 'Russian

threat' – a claim that Moscow has dismissed as "nonsense."

"We do not threaten Estonia, or any other European country," Peskov told journalist Pavel



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Zarubin on Sunday. *“But if nuclear weapons are deployed on Estonian territory and are aimed at [Russia], then our nuclear weapons will be aimed at Estonian territory,”* he warned, adding that Tallinn *“should have a solid understanding of it.”*

Earlier this week, Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna said Estonia is not against the idea of hosting NATO nuclear weapons, adding that the country will be ready if the bloc decides to deploy them there.

Estonia has been one of Ukraine's top supporters and has pushed for increased defense spending in Europe, citing the supposed threat of a Russian attack. Last year, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called Estonia *“one of the most hostile countries,”* and accused it of *“spreading myths and falsehoods”* about Russia.



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Estonia is not the first European NATO member to express a desire to acquire nuclear weapons one way or the other. Earlier this month, Polish President Karol Nawrocki suggested that Poland should develop its own nuclear weapons program.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz told the Munich Security Conference in mid-February that he had discussed EU-level nuclear deterrence with French President Emmanuel Macron. Earlier, a senior MP from his party said Berlin should have access to French and British nuclear weapons.

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# UK trace found in assassination attempt on Russian general – FSB chief

Vladimir Alekseyev was targeted by Ukrainian intelligence, but the plot was supported by the West, Aleksandr Bortnikov has said



FSB Director Aleksandr Bortnikov. © Sputnik/Alexander Kazakov

Britain's secret services were involved in the attempted assassination of Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev, Aleksandr Bortnikov, the Director of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), has stated.

Alekseyev, first deputy chief of Russia's Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), was shot several times in the back earlier this month as he waited by an elevator in his apartment block in western Moscow. He survived the attack.

The Russian authorities have since detained three suspects in connection with the assassination attempt, including the alleged gunman – identified as 65-year-old Ukrainian-born Russian citizen Lyubomir Korba – who was extradited to Russia with the assistance of the United Arab Emirates.

In an interview with Vesti TV channel on Sunday, Bortnikov reiterated that the assassination attempt was orchestrated by Kiev's intelligence services. However, they had been acting with the support of "third countries," Bortnikov said.

*"We see the UK trace here, first and foremost. That's why the investigation continues,"* the FSB chief said, without providing further details. He pledged that Russia would not allow the attack to go unanswered, describing any public discussion of specific retaliatory measures as *"a delicate issue."*

*"We are closely monitoring everything that is happening. Of course, we will never forget, and we will never forgive,"* Bortnikov added.

The FSB previously said that Polish special services helped Ukraine to recruit Korba by using his son, who is a Polish citizen. Korba later admitted working for Kiev, saying he was promised \$30,000 for killing the general.

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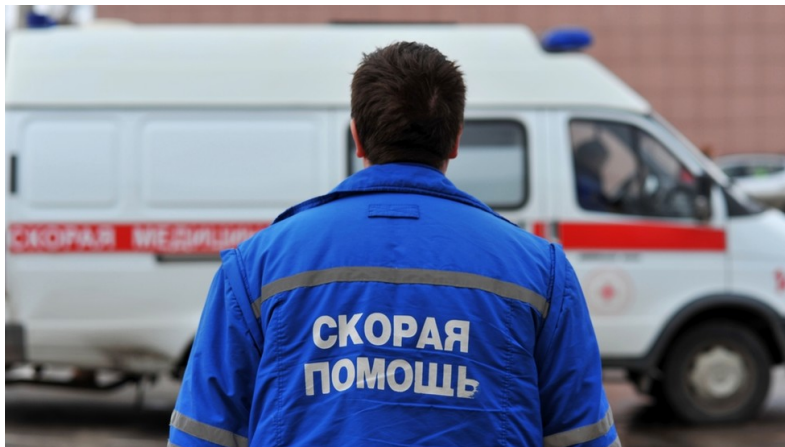


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# Ukraine launches drone raid on Russian border region – officials

The attack wounded several civilians, including a three-year-old girl, Belgorod Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov has said



© Sputnik/Alexey Sukhorukov

Ukraine launched a series of overnight drone strikes on Russian territory, primarily targeting the border region of Belgorod, the Defense Ministry in Moscow has said. Local officials reported that several civilians were injured, including a three-year-old girl.

In a statement on Sunday, the ministry said Russian air defenses intercepted and destroyed 86 Ukrainian UAVs across nine regions. The largest number (29 drones) was downed over Belgorod

Region, followed by 14 over Saratov Region in central Russia.

Belgorod Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said one of the drones struck a car near the hamlet of Krasivo, about 10 km from the border, injuring a man and a three-year-old girl. Both were hospitalized with mine-blast trauma and shrapnel wounds.

He also reported two separate strikes in which three other people, including a woman, were injured. Attacks across the region hit residential apartments, commercial facilities, gas pipes, and power lines, according to the governor. One district reported damage to an infrastructure site that cut electricity to some residents.

Belgorod and other Russian border regions have been consistently targeted by Ukrainian drones throughout the conflict, with Moscow accusing Kiev of "terrorism" and deliberately attacking civilians and critical infrastructure.

Earlier this month, the local authorities said a wave of Ukrainian strikes damaged energy infrastructure in Belgorod Region, leading to widespread power outages and disruption of heating and water supplies.

In response to the attacks on border areas and deeper into Russia, Moscow has targeted Ukraine's defense-related infrastructure, including energy facilities. Russian officials insist the attacks never target civilians.



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