



Poland Deploys 40,000 Soldiers at the Border with Belarus and Russia

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Poland has announced the deployment of about **40,000 soldiers** along its eastern borders with Belarus and Russia, in response to the Russian drone incursion that occurred on Wednesday and coinciding with the start of the joint military exercises **“Zapad 2025”**, organized by Moscow and Minsk.

The Shadow of Zapad 2025

The Russian-Belarusian exercises, which will begin on Friday and continue until Tuesday, are expected to involve **tens of thousands of military personnel**. Warsaw has decided to strengthen its military presence with a significant contingent, describing the event as a potential prelude to new aggressive moves against Eastern Europe.

“Poland has been preparing for the Zapad 2025 maneuvers for months,” said Deputy Defense Minister **Cezary Tomczyk** to Polsat News. *“Our army has already conducted training*

with over 30,000 Polish soldiers and NATO forces. Let us not forget that Zapad is an offensive exercise.”

Border Closures

On the eve of the maneuvers, Poland announced the **temporary closure of border crossings with Belarus**, a measure that—after the incursion of about 20 Russian drones—was extended “**until further notice**”.

According to Warsaw, one of the scenarios envisaged by Zapad 2025 involves a possible attack on the **Suwałki Corridor**, the narrow strip of territory connecting Poland and Lithuania, long considered NATO's “Achilles' heel”.

Foreign Minister **Radosław Sikorski** reiterated that Poland is treating the Russian threat with “**utmost seriousness**”, recalling how similar exercises preceded the conflicts in **Georgia (2008)** and **Ukraine (2014 and 2022)**.

Regional Concerns

Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** warned that the exercises could constitute “**a cover for an attack**” towards countries further west.

Lithuanian authorities, however, estimate that the maneuvers will be smaller in scale compared to 2021, with about **30,000 soldiers involved**.

Meanwhile, **Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Poland** are preparing for a series of joint NATO exercises, also involving about **40,000 troops**, to strengthen deterrence on the Alliance's eastern flank.

The Polish Army: A Power Among Powers

In the last ten years, Poland has established itself as one of the European countries that have invested the most in defense, radically transforming its armed forces to become today one of the most significant military realities in NATO. From **2014 to 2024**, the Polish army has grown from about **99,000 personnel** to over **216,000 active military**, with an ambitious plan aiming to reach **300,000 men by 2030**.

Today, Poland is the NATO country that allocates the highest share of its GDP to defense: **over 4.1% in 2024**, with the prospect of reaching **4.7% in 2025**, well above the minimum 2% threshold set by the Alliance. This commitment has enabled the launch of a vast modernization program that includes **South Korean K2 Black Panther tanks, K9 Thunder howitzers, Patriot and Narew air defense systems**, in addition to fifth-generation fighters **F-35 Lightning II**.

With the **Homeland Defence Act**, Warsaw has redesigned the structure of the armed forces and introduced new tools to strengthen the reserve. The goal is to ensure the country not only defense capabilities but also a credible deterrent role in a regional context marked by Russian aggression and the war in Ukraine.

Today, the Polish army is no longer just a regional force: in terms of size, capability, and growth speed, it represents a true **power among powers** within NATO.

A Border Under Pressure

In recent years, Poland has strengthened defenses along the **400 kilometers of border with Belarus**, already the epicenter of the migration crisis orchestrated by Minsk and Moscow with the dispatch of thousands of migrants towards the European Union.

Tension remains extremely high, even though the **Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, General Wiesław Kukuła**, confirmed that Belarusian authorities had warned Warsaw in advance of the passage of Russian drones in Polish airspace.

According to his words, that alert proved to be “**useful for us**” but at the same time “**surprising**”, given the difficult political and military relations between the two countries.

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