

US expands military presence near Russian border

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This month, the US Army's 101st Airborne Division deployed to Europe for the first time since the Second World War as part of a major military buildup of NATO's front line along the borders of Ukraine and Russia.

NATO members are sending "more ships, planes and troops to NATO's eastern flank, from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south," NATO said in a statement earlier this month.

CBS titled its profile of the deployment, "The U.S. Army's 101st Airborne is practicing for war with Russia just miles from Ukraine's border."

Brigadier General John Lubas, noting that nearly 5,000 troops from the 101st Airborne had joined the more than 100,000 soldiers deployed in Europe, told CBS, "This is not a training deployment, this is a combat deployment for us. We understand we need to be ready to fight tonight."

CBS's "embedded" reporter concluded, "If the fighting escalates or there's any attack on NATO, they're fully prepared to cross the border into Ukraine."

The last time the unit was deployed to Europe was in the storming of D-Day during the Second World War. "The 101st hasn't been back to Europe since the end of World War II," 2nd Lt. Patrick Tabor said in a statement. "Now we're back aligned underneath the 1st Infantry Division. It's a very unique opportunity."

The 101st Airborne is being deployed in Romania as part of the NATO battle group set up in May.

Speaking Wednesday to Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciuc?, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg described the extent of NATO's buildup in the region: "You host one of NATO's new battlegroups in the Black Sea region. We are reinforcing NATO's presence from the Black to the Baltic Sea. Fighter jets from Canada help to keep your skies safe. And thousands of French, Dutch, Belgian and US troops are in Romania to deter

aggression."

Replying to what he called Russian President Vladimir Putin's "dangerous nuclear rhetoric," Stoltenberg said, "NATO will not be intimidated or deterred from supporting Ukraine's right to self-defense."

Following the outbreak of the Ukraine war, NATO reinforced its existing four battle groups in Eastern Europe and pledged to form four additional battle groups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

"This has brought the total number of multinational battlegroups to eight, effectively doubled the number of troops on the ground and extended NATO's forward presence along the Alliance's eastern flank—from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south," NATO said in a statement last week.

This expansion is proceeding further, with NATO allies pledging at the June summit in Madrid to "enhance the multinational battlegroups from battalions up to brigade size."

In a provocative article entitled, "American Troops Prepared to Engage in War With Russia," *Newsweek* reported, "A U.S. aircraft carrier is prepared to lead an international charge should Russia escalate attacks against Ukraine and its allies."

Newsweek noted, "The USS George H.W. Bush ... is in the Adriatic Sea leading Neptune Strike 2022—a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deployment that tests deterrence and defense in the Euro-Atlantic area."

"The Neptune series is a tangible demonstration of the power and capability of the NATO Alliance in all domain operations," Vice Admiral Thomas Ishee, commander of the US Sixth Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, said in announcing the exercise.

"Neptune Strike 2022 is a prime example of NATO's ability to integrate high-end maritime warfare capabilities of an allied carrier strike group, ensuring our collective ability to deter and defend."

The exercise includes over 80 aircraft, 14 ships and approximately 6,000 personnel.

On Wednesday, US President Joe Biden met with leaders of the Defense Department, pledging to expand the size and funding of the US military.

“We made clear in the National Security Strategy that modernizing and strengthening our military is a core source of our national strength and is a priority for me and my administration,” Biden said.

“And as we made clear in the National Security Strategy, this is a decisive decade, not because of any one of us—because the world is changing.”

On Wednesday, Russia staged a series of nuclear tests, demonstrating “Russia’s strategic offensive forces’ readiness to conduct a massive nuclear strike in response to an enemy nuclear strike,” in the words of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Shoigu said the nuclear test, the first since the start of the war in Ukraine, was designed to simulate a “massive nuclear strike.”

Russia launched an intercontinental ballistic missile, fired a missile from a nuclear submarine and carried out tests with two Tu-95 long-range strategic nuclear bombers.

Russia’s drills took place at the same time as NATO’s “steadfast noon” nuclear tests, in which US B-52s simulated dropping nuclear bombs in Europe. The drills are ongoing and will continue through October 30.

Also Wednesday, the US launched a rocket from Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia, conducting nearly a dozen hypersonic weapon experiments in their rush to build new hypersonic missiles that could be used to deliver nuclear warheads.

Under these supercharged conditions, in which both the United States and NATO are carrying out nuclear weapons tests on a daily basis, the danger exists that a miscalculation or provocation could dramatically escalate the conflict.



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