

NEWS

Defense Official Says Russian Forces Ready to Launch Attack on Ukraine

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A large-scale Russian attack on Ukraine is imminent with Russian forces arrayed against the country "as ready as they can be," a senior defense official said today.

About 80% of the Russian forces along the border with Ukraine and inside Belarus have moved to their forward positions, the official said.



On Saturday, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III said that Russian forces were uncoiling. "Today, they are uncoiled," the official said.

Russian forces have taken positions as close as 5 to 50 kilometers (3.1 miles to 31 miles) to the border. The distance from the border depends on the assigned missions, what their objectives are, and the topography of the region.

The Russian units have also "advanced their readiness to a point where they are literally ready to go — now," the official said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full range of capabilities to the area from significant offensive missile capability to offensive ground power. There are more than two dozen warships in the Black Sea, and 10 of those vessels are amphibious. "He has cruise missile capability. He's got ballistic missile capability arrayed," the official said. "He's got armor, artillery, ... infantry, special forces. ... We assess today that he is near 100% of all the forces that we anticipated that he would move in."

Overall, there are between 160,000 to 190,000 Russian troops facing off against Ukraine. The Ukrainian military is much smaller, but it is no longer the force that Putin's military pushed aside in the first invasion in 2014.



"This is not the same Ukrainian armed forces that Mr. Putin met in 2014," the official said. "(I) will just tell you that they are more competent and they're more capable than they were just eight years ago. They have benefited from not only the millions and millions of dollars of security assistance that the United States has provided, but the training that we have also provided on a rotational basis and that other nations have, as well," the official said.

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