



NATO Increases Military Flights Along Belarus Border As Putin Blames EU For Migrant Crisis

Description

Previously we noted that despite tiny NATO-member Estonia not actually sharing a border with Belarus, its government ordered snap military drills and the erecting of additional barbed-wire along its border with Russia in a message of solidarity with Poland amid the migrant standoff.

Fresh EU sanctions on Minsk, coupled with persisting clashes at the Belarus-Poland border, mean that things could easily escalate to a military conflict between the two countries, and into a broader NATO-Russia-Belarus standoff, given Moscow is Lukashenko's closest ally. Alarming, on Thursday the Belarusian government cited a **noticeable uptick in NATO aircraft activity "along the state border of Belarus"**.

The Belarusian Defense Ministry statement was translated by [Russian media sources](#): "Our radio and radar reconnaissance means **registered constant increase in the intensity of flights of reconnaissance and combat aviation of NATO member states** along the state border of Belarus, including in the airspace of Ukraine," it said.

More broadly, the defense ministry connected the heightened activity to a threatening NATO build-up at its border – something which was persistently emphasized during last year's crackdown on anti-Lukashenko protests, for which Minsk was slapped with EU sanctions the first time around (with fresh EU sanctions being readied this week as Lukashenko stands accuses of orchestrating the migrant crisis).

According to further details of the allegation via [TASS](#):

*The total number of these flights had doubled recently, while **flights by US aircraft increased by 50%**, the ministry said. Unmanned surveillance aircraft continue to be used a lot, it said. The aircraft fly as close as 15-20 kilometers from the Belarusian border, according to the statement.*

Belarus says the **number of NATO flights has "almost doubled"** in recent years. "These facts

confirm the buildup of military activity near our borders and testify to the further escalation of the situation around Belarus,” the defense ministry said.

Chaotic scenes continue to emerge at border camps made up of mostly Middle Eastern migrants seeking to make their way to Germany or other Western Europe countries:

[#Belarus](#) Another large group of migrants is leaving the border right now. Today, Iraq plans to evacuate Iraqi citizens from Belarus to Iraq pic.twitter.com/bJ7wHuwI4f

— Hanna Liubakova (@HannaLiubakova) [November 18, 2021](#)

Also on Thursday Russian President Vladimir Putin turned Europe’s accusations around, saying the migrant crisis is instead being used as a pretext to further [pressure Belarus](#):

*Russian President Vladimir Putin has alleged that western countries are using the ongoing immigration crisis at the Belarus-Poland border as **a pretext for escalating tensions and exercising pressure against Belarus** – Moscow’s neighbor and ally.*

Describing before a foreign ministry conference that the EU is “violating their own obligations in humanitarian sphere” due to harsh treatment of migrants at the Polish border, the Russian leader explained:

“I just feel sorry for the children. [Polish forces] pour water and tear gas there, throw grenades there. Helicopters fly along the border and [Polish side] turns the sirens on at nights.”

Some of the chaotic nighttime scenes from the border days ago...

Nieopodal ok.100-os.grupa migrantów oczekiwają na możliwość nielegalnego przekroczenia granicy. Białorusini wyposażyli cudzoziemców w gaz łzawiący, który został użyty w kierunku polskich służb. Tej oraz kolejnym próbom nielegalnego przekroczenia granicy zapobiegamy pic.twitter.com/aUq2WLbv0T

— Straż Graniczna (@Straz_Graniczna) [November 13, 2021](#)

For over the past year since Lukashenko’s contested re-election to a sixth term, Western mainstream media has been intensely amplifying Belarusian opposition voices...

Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana [@Tsihanouskaya](#) tells me migrants on the Belarus/Poland border are “in the hands of a criminal who wants to take revenge on EU because they are standing with Belarusians” – and stresses Lukashenko’s regime does not represent Belarusians. pic.twitter.com/SAY7AdHYdF

— Christiane Amanpour (@camanpour) [November 17, 2021](#)

Some observers have said that Belarus is likely next on NATO's list of countries targeted for regime change, given strongman Lukashenko has been in power for approaching three decades, as makes up part of the so-called "[union state](#)".

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And recall last week, when the crisis began grabbing international spotlight...

Russia took the rare step of dispatching two nuclear-capable strategic bombers to patrol Belarusian airspace in a show of support for its close ally amid rising tensions between Belarus and Poland over a migrant crisis at their mutual border <https://t.co/AruEKAsGLEpic.twitter.com/IXOIFN18zV>

— Reuters (@Reuters) [November 10, 2021](#)

Date Created

11/20/2021