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Russia's Response to US-NATO War Preparations? Kremlin Orders Military Deployment on Belarusian-Ukrainian Border

Par Ivan Proshkin
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In the first days of June, the news became known that the 28th mechanized brigade had been transferred from its place of permanent deployment in Ekaterinburg to the city of Klintsy in Bryansk region on the border with Belarus. According to the first deputy head of the city administration, Oleg Kletny, the soldiers arrived at their new stationing point on May 30th.

This instance of re-deployment has caused a real storm in the media on both sides of the Russian-Belarusian border. On June 2nd, two journalists asked the press-secretary of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, to comment on the appearance of Russian soldiers on the Belarusian border, to which he answered:

"I know nothing about this. But speaking of a strengthening of the grouping on the border with Belarus would be an exaggeration.

The Russian ambassador to Belarus, Alexander Surikov, then came forth with commentary and stated that the transfer of Russian troops was due to the activism of radicals in Ukraine who could pose a threat to the security of the Russian border. He stated:

> "Why Belorussia? As I understand it, the Minsk Agreements aren't working out for us and radicalism in Ukraine is once again on the rise. Besides Right Sector, new forces are forming that are ultra-right and more radical. In Ukraine, the point of war is once again beginning to prevail. But we really wish that it wouldn't. Thus, these are but preventative measures."

Following this, at a routine press conference Peskov addressed the question put forth to him by journalists regarding the comments of the Russian ambassador in the Russian Foreign Ministry, and said that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is more competent to comment on such than he himself.



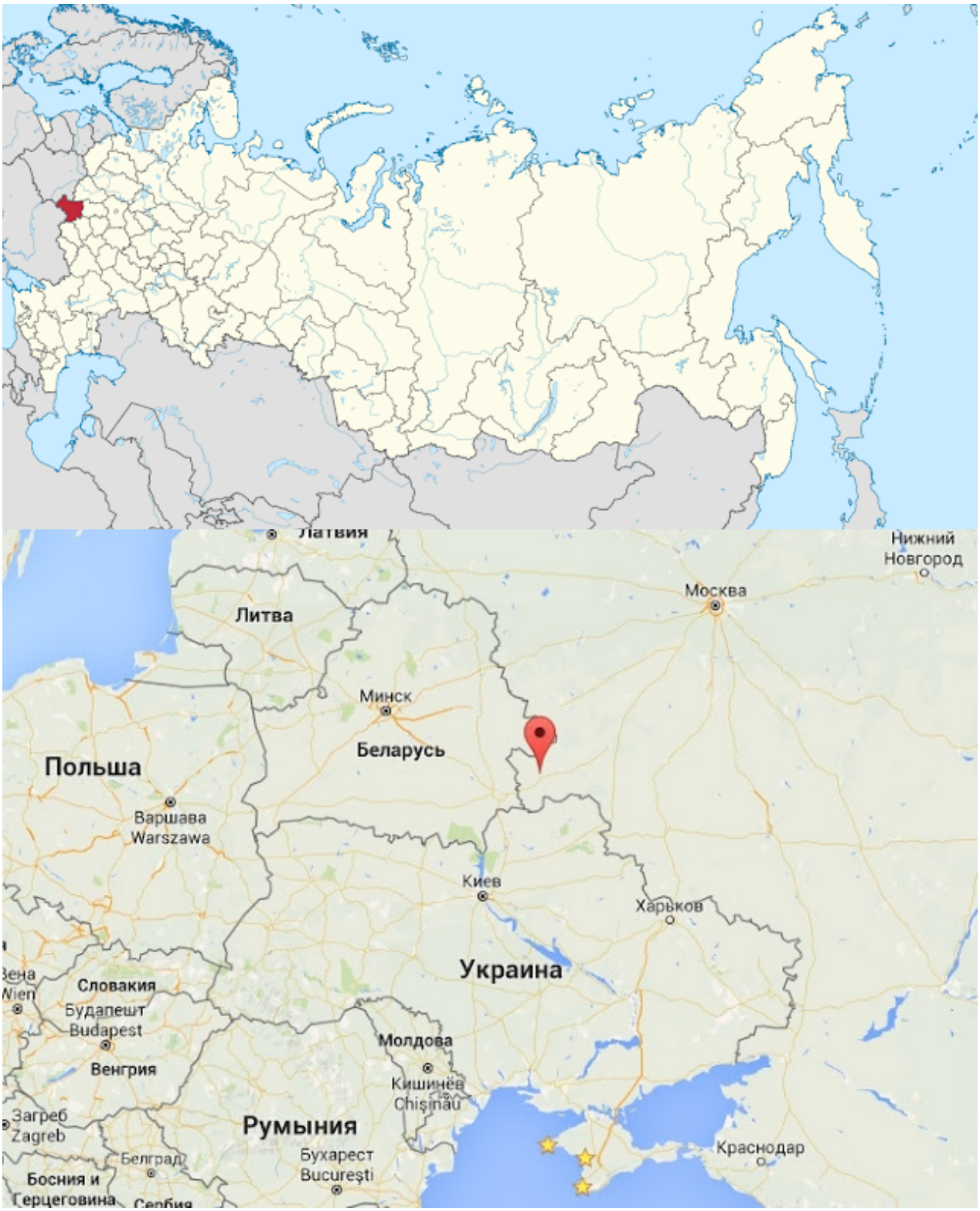
The redeployment of Russian soldiers was also enthusiastically commented on by Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian liberal media. The later have declared that Russia is allegedly planning to realize a “Crimean scenario” in the neighboring country, which means that Minsk should keep its eyes open and not allow any provocations on the part of its eastern neighbor. Russian liberal media declared that this was an attempt by Moscow to increase coercive pressure on Minsk on some important issues that the two have not yet agreed upon, such as on the price of gas. In Belarus, some publications sympathetic to liberal and nationalist movements inside the country declared that it was necessary to prepare for imminent “Russian aggression,” even by going as far as to discuss how many division should be put up against the Russian army.

The head of the analytical center Belarus Security Blog, Andrey Porotnikov, stated that the concentration of Russian military units intended for an offensive operation is a direct threat to Belarus. In his opinion, this is caused by the fact that in Russia an alleged “war party” is in power which under the pretext of strengthening positions in the context of the confrontation with NATO tends to intervene in the internal affairs of the republics of the post-Soviet space. Porotnikov stated:

> “Russia has abandoned the principle to which it adhered since 1991 – non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbors. Its foreign policy has become unpredictable and demonstrates a complete lack of recognition of the independence of post-Soviet states and the inviolability of borders in Europe.”

But let’s digress from this wave of hysteria, the goal of which among other things is warming up the next wave of Russophobia in Belarus, and let’s look at the situation from a position of reason. The Bryansk region to which Russian units have been relocated borders Belarus in the north. The southern part has a border with the Chernigovskaya and Sumskaya

regions of Ukraine, in which there is an unstable situation that, according to the Russian ambassador in Belarus, is the region for the transfer of additional forces of the Russian army to this region. As for the city of Klintsy, it is located directly in the middle of the western ledge of the Bryanskaya region between the Russian-Belarusian and Russian-Ukrainian borders.



The forces which Russia has deployed to Klintsy are extremely small. According to some reports, the personnel of the unit that has arrived in Bryansk region consists of little more than 200 persons of the 28th brigade. But if you listen to biased media, then the impression

might be made that Russia is re-locating just about its entire army along the Russian-Belarusian border in preparation for crossing the border and realizing the notorious "Crimean scenario" in the case of a problem in Russian-Belarusian relations.

In fact, Russia's activity is explained firstly by the already-mentioned Ukrainian problem. Secondly, this comes in conjunction with the significant increase of NATO activity in Eastern Europe. Relatively recently, the general secretary of the North Atlantic Alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, stated that four additional NATO battalions will be deployed in Poland this year.

Moreover, American, British, German, Polish and other countries' soldiers soldiers are periodically holding exercises in Poland and the Baltic states. Over the past few years, they have also become frequent guests in Ukraine, whose leaders have declared Russia to be the main national security threat, as in their official documents they now call our country the "aggressor country." Naturally, in this context of the extremely hostile policy of our "Western partners" and their cohort Kiev, the strengthening of Russian troops on Russia's western borders is a reasonable and justified step.

That such activities will be held was stated at the beginning of this year by the commander of Russia's land forces, General-Colonel Oleg Salyukov. In his words, "the formation of new divisions is one of the measures of response to the increasing intensity of NATO exercises in the recent period." The same statement was repeatedly made by the head of the Russian defense ministry, Sergey Shoigu, who on May 4th stated:

> "The ministry of defense has adopted a number of measures whose goal is countering the buildup of NATO forces in close proximity to Russian borders."

In the context of a further threat by NATO and its allies, NATO said that three new division will be established in the western zone which will be equipped with the most modern weapons. Frankly speaking, a land division of the Russian army has about 10,000 personnel. It isn't difficult to calculate that three new divisions would mean 30,000 people whom Russia would deploy to counter the NATO threat on its western borders. Thus, the hysteria spread by certain media sources, political analysts and other "experts" who decried a "Russian threat" when 200 Russian servicemen arrived in one of our western regions is not very understandable. Similar measures were announced in advance, and their purposes were also clearly stated. The purpose is not to blackmail any allies to the west in any way, especially not Belarus.

It's good that Minsk understands this. Just the other day, the president of the republic, Alexander Lukashenko, stated that in the case of a war with NATO that the Russian and Belarusian armies would fight together against the alliance:

> "The Russians often talk about how new NATO contingents are being deployed up to Russia's borders. It must be emphasized that above all this is happening at our borders, Belarusian borders. We see this and accept it without whining. Adequate measures are being taken without any noise."

In addition, Lukashenko emphasized that Belarusian units would be the first to enter into battle against the enemy and would hold back NATO forces until the first reinforcements of the Russian army arrive from its western regions. Lukashenko said: "We have a joint

grouping of armed forces in the west which will ensure the security of our fatherland – Belarus and Russia. And at the heart of this group are units of the Belarusian army."

Lukashenko's promise is very clear. Belarus is the front line of defense of our Common Fatherland, and Russia is the rear of Belorussia which will immediately come to the rescue in the event of aggression. And it is precisely for such prompt aid that Russia should concentrate troops on its western border. And the more the better. Therefore, it is not worth listening to all kinds of hysterics aimed at inciting hatred between two fraternal and allied countries, between the two parts of which there is one people. Russia and Belorussia will always confront our common enemy together. He who comes to us with the sword will perish by the sword. Of course, no one wants war, but it's always necessary to have a sharpened sword. We, together with the Belarusians, are taking care of this now.

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Articles Par : Ivan Proshkin

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