

‘Nuclear weapons for everyone’ who joins Belarus and Russia, Putin ally promises

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's comment comes amid escalating nuclear rhetoric from Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose army is floundering in Ukraine.



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko raised eyebrows Sunday when he said nuclear weapons could be deployed to other nations that join the Union State between Belarus and Russia. Ilya Pitalev / AP

May 29, 2023, 7:20 AM EDT

By [Yuliya Talmazan](#)

Belarusian President [Alexander Lukashenko](#), a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, promised nuclear weapons to any nation that joined [Russia](#) and [Belarus](#).

The comment came just days after the Belarusian leader confirmed the transfer of Russian nuclear weapons to his country. Putin has periodically hinted at a nuclear escalation since [the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine](#), dramatically increasing tensions with the U.S. and the West.

“It’s very simple. You have to join the union between Belarus and Russia, and that’s it: There will be nuclear weapons for everyone,” Lukashenko said in a comment aired Sunday night on Russian state TV.

“I think it’s possible,” Lukashenko added, saying that he was expressing his own view. “We need to strategically understand that we have a unique chance to unite.”

Lukashenko, who is one of [Putin](#)'s staunchest supporters, made the comment in response to earlier remarks by [Kassym-Jomart Tokayev](#), the president of Kazakhstan, during a summit in Moscow on Wednesday.

Tokayev said at the forum of the Eurasian Economic Union that Belarus and Russia enjoy a close relationship where “even nuclear weapons are shared between the two.”



[Putin announces plan to station tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus](#)

March 25, 2023 01:06

The Union State between Russia and Belarus was formed in 1999 and allows the two former Soviet republics to integrate economically, politically and militarily.

On Thursday, the Belarusian leader confirmed that Russia has moved on the plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, first announced in March.

It comes amid [escalating nuclear rhetoric](#) from Putin as his war effort in Ukraine flounders. Russia has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world, which Putin said it will not hesitate to use if the country's security or existence is threatened.

Belarus, which does not possess its own nuclear weapons after it transferred the stock it inherited from the Soviet era to Russia in the 1990s, is not [officially a party](#) to the war in Ukraine, although Moscow used its territory to launch the full-scale invasion last year.

Putin propped up Lukashenko's authoritarian regime after violent protests nearly toppled "Europe's last dictator" in 2020, deepening the country's political and economic reliance on Russia.

In March, the Russian leader [announced his plans](#) to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, on Lukashenko's request, drawing [condemnation](#) from the West.

Lukashenko confirmed that the movement of nuclear weapons had already begun on Thursday, without clarifying if they had already reached Belarusian soil, according to Belarusian state news agency Belta.

Meanwhile, defense ministers of the two countries, Sergei Shoigu and Viktor Khrenin, signed documents in Minsk last week, defining the procedure for keeping Russian nuclear weapons in Belarusian territory, the Russian Defense Ministry [said](#).

Moscow has already handed over to Minsk the "Iskander" missile system, which can carry nuclear weapons, Shoigu said, and has assisted in converting some Belarusian aircraft for the possible nuclear weapon use.

The State Department denounced the alleged deployment Thursday, calling it "the latest example of irresponsible behavior" by Russia.



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SOURCE: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/nuclear-weapons-ukraine-belarus-lukashenko-russia-putin-rcna86640>