

Russian President Puts Troops on Alert in West Russia



Moscow, February 27 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered an urgent drill to test the combat readiness of the country's armed forces across western Russia, including the border area towards Ukraine.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Putin ordered forces of the Western Military District to be put on alert on Wednesday. The defense minister said that "in accordance with an order from the president of the Russian Federation, forces of the Western Military District were put on alert."

Massive military drills are to be held for four days beginning February 28th and most of the country's armed units including ships of the Baltic and the Northern Fleets and the Air Force are involved in the drills. According to the defense ministry, some 150,000 soldiers are to participate during the military exercises.

There was no official statement from Moscow that the massive maneuvers are linked to the upheavals in Ukraine, which led to the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich.

On February 23rd, the Ukrainian parliament ousted president Viktor Yanukovich and named Oleksandr Turchynov, the legislature's newly-elected speaker, as interim president. Moscow has questioned the legitimacy of Ukraine's new government, saying the current authorities have come to power as a result of an "armed mutiny."

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