

Russian general says NATO preparing for major conflict



Moscow, December 19 (RHC)-- A senior Russian military general says the U.S.-led NATO military alliance is preparing its forces for a major conflict, citing an increase in NATO's war games close to Russian borders in the region.

Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov told foreign military attachés in Moscow that “NATO is purposefully training its troops to be engaged in a major military conflict.” He said NATO has recently intensified its large-scale military exercises in the Baltics, Poland, and the Black Sea region. And the military alliance has also launched a smear campaign about a “Russian military threat” in an effort to vilify Moscow, Gerasimov added.

He said Russia had not been sitting idly by in the face of the military build-up around its borders. Gerasimov explained that the Russian military had been developing new cutting-edge weapons that are able to bypass any existing air defenses, one of which is an air-launched hypersonic missile known as Kinzhal. The missile had successfully completed a series of tests, including in the Arctic, he added.

Asked if a major war could break out over the coming years, the general said that there were no immediate “prerequisites” for a full-blown war, although the situation was “unstable” due the pressure being put by the West on independent actors like Russia. “In such conditions, we can't rule out that crises could emerge that may get out of control and develop into a large-scale military conflict.”

The Russian general said NATO had to “resume interaction [with Moscow]... in order to resolve the accumulated problematic issues.” Russia has long been wary of NATO’s increased build-up near its borders. President Vladimir Putin has warned of “NATO expansion,” which he described as “one of the potential threats to our country’s security.”

Last year, some 19 countries, mostly from NATO, stationed around 18,000 troops in Poland and the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. A multi-national NATO battle group conducted military drills under U.S. leadership in Poland, while Germany, Britain, and Canada led the operations in the three other countries.

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