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Aug 9 (Reuters) – Russia will build up forces at its western borders following Finland’s accession to the U.S.-led NATO alliance, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told the governing board of the ministry on Wednesday.

In opening remarks to the Collegium of the Defence Ministry, Shoigu said NATO-member Poland had already announced plans to strengthen its military, and that he expected significant NATO forces and weaponry to be deployed in Finland, whose inclusion has almost doubled the length of Russia’s land border with NATO.

“The collective West is waging a proxy war against Russia,” he said, according to his ministry, pointing to its “unprecedented support” for Ukraine in supplying tens of billions of dollars’ worth of weaponry to help Kyiv repel Russian forces.

Shoigu called the entry of Finland into NATO and the future entry of Sweden “a serious destabilising factor”. The two Nordic states abandoned generations of neutrality that had held throughout the Cold War to seek NATO membership following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine early last year.

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