

Putin monitors practice launches by Russia's nuclear forces

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday monitored drills of the country's strategic nuclear forces involving multiple practice launches of ballistic and cruise missiles, in a show of force amid the heightened tensions with the West over the conflict in Ukraine.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to Putin that the exercise was intended to simulate a "massive nuclear strike" by Russia in retaliation for a nuclear attack on the country.

The maneuvers followed Putin's warning about his readiness to use "all means available" to fend off attacks on Russia's territory in a clear reference to the country's nuclear arsenals.

During the Russian drills Wednesday, a Yars land-based intercontinental ballistic missile was test-fired from the northern Plesetsk launch site. A Russian nuclear submarine in the Barents Sea also launched a Sineva ICBM at the Kura firing range on the far-eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, and Tu-95 strategic fired cruise missiles at practice targets.

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