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By Vladimir Isachenkov

Belarusian leader accuses Lithuania of dumping dead migrants

Білоруський лідер звинуватив Литву у підкиданні мертвих тіл мігрантів
Президент Білорусі Олександр Лукашенко звинуватив владу Литви у підкиданні тіл мігрантів на кордоні між двома країнами — цю претензію Литва відхилила на тлі зростання напруженості через міграцію.

О. Лукашенко також попередив, що його країна повністю підтримає свого союзника Росію, якщо українська влада почне наступ на підтримуваних Москвою повстанців на сході України. Він намагається скинути напруженість через мігрантів у рамках нібито західної змови проти Білорусі та Росії.

О. Лукашенко на зустрічі з вищим військовим керівництвом заявив, що білоруські прикордонники виявили два тіла мігрантів, залишених на кордоні.

<https://apnews.com/article/europe-russia-ukraine-migration-moscow-f8bf944e619716367d4a8810da389ca3>



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko attends a meeting with top level military officials in Minsk, Belarus, Monday, Nov. 22, 2021. (Nikolay Petrov/BelTA Pool Photo via AP)

MOSCOW (AP) — Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Monday accused Lithuanian authorities of dumping the bodies of migrants on the border between the two countries — a claim rejected by Lithuania amid soaring tensions over migration.

Lukashenko also warned that his country will stand squarely behind its ally Russia if the Ukrainian authorities launch an offensive against Moscow-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine. He tried to cast the tensions over migrants as part of a purported Western plot against Belarus and Russia.

Lukashenko said at a meeting with top military brass that Belarusian border guards found two bodies of migrants left on the border over the weekend.

“They put a dead body, or, probably, a person who is still alive, in a sleeping bag and toss it on the border,” Lukashenko exclaimed. “What an abomination!”

Lithuania's State Border Guard Service rejected the Belarusian claim Sunday, saying that Belarusian authorities have repeatedly tried to stage and direct beatings, the crippling or even deaths of migrants, while blaming Lithuania for such "inhumane treatment."

The European Union has accused Lukashenko of waging a "hybrid attack" against the bloc, encouraging migrants to cross into neighboring EU members Poland and Lithuania to destabilize the bloc in revenge for sanctions in response to Belarus' crackdown on protests that erupted after a contested presidential election last year.

Belarusian authorities have denied the accusations and shot back at the EU, accusing it of failing to offer safe passage to migrants. Since Nov. 8, a large group of migrants, mostly Iraqi Kurds, has been stranded in Belarus at a border crossing with Poland, trapped as forces from the two countries face off against each other. Most are fleeing conflict or a sense of hopelessness at home, and aim to reach Germany or other Western European countries.

Lukashenko charged Monday that Belarusian border guards also found several other freezing migrants who were barely alive at an abandoned farmhouse near the border.

He sought to turn the tables on the West, accusing Poland and others of fanning tensions over migrants as part of "multi-pronged hybrid warfare" against Belarus and its ally Russia.

He ordered military officials to raise troop readiness in view of NATO maneuvers near Belarusian borders.

The Belarusian leader dismissed Western concerns about alleged Russian plans to invade Ukraine that borders Belarus to the south, saying that Moscow would have let him know about it if it had such intentions. But he warned Ukrainian authorities that if they try to use force to reclaim areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland known as Donbas, Belarus would stand squarely with Russia.

"If they try to launch a small war in Donbas or somewhere on the border with Russia, Belarus will not stay aside, and it's clear whose side it will take," he said. "They understand that, and that is why they started beefing up forces on the Ukrainian border with Belarus, even though there is no reason for that."

He alleged that it was the West that fanned tensions over the migrant crisis in a bid to distract Belarus' attention.

"They understand very well that if Ukraine tries to unleash a conflict with Russia, Belarus will not stay idle and so they need to contain the Belarusian army," Lukashenko said.

The Ukrainian authorities have voiced concern that Russian troops could use Belarusian territory to invade Ukraine.

The Kremlin has denied plans to invade Ukraine and accused the Ukrainian authorities and their Western backers of making the claims to cover up their own allegedly aggressive designs.

Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Yuras Karmanau in Kyiv, Ukraine, contributed to this report.