
BULGARIA, MACEDONIA TO HOLD JOINT OPERATIONS AMID MIGRANT CRISIS

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Balkan neighbors Bulgaria and Macedonia will hold joint air and land operations along their common border to ensure control of it amid an increased flow of migrants, the Bulgarian government press office said.

Last week, Macedonia closed its border completely to illegal migrants after Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia announced tight new restrictions on migrant entry.

Thousands of migrants have gathered on the Greek side of that country's border with Macedonia, which had been allowing small numbers of Syrians and Iraqis through but stopped this after its neighbors tightened up their policies.

"Prime Minister (Boiko) Borisov and President (Gjorge) Ivanov agreed to carry out joint Bulgarian-Macedonian operations by air and land in the coming days to ensure border control," the Bulgarian press office said in a statement on Thursday.

Borisov said Sofia was preparing to send humanitarian aid for the refugees in Macedonia.

Bulgarian authorities did not disclose any details about the joint border operations.

Last month, Bulgaria's parliament voted to let its army assist police in guarding the Black Sea state's borders to avoid a refugee influx that has overwhelmed some of its neighbors.

Sofia's move coincided with tightening border controls along the main migration corridor from Greece northward through Macedonia and Serbia, raising concern that migrants fleeing war and deprivation in the Middle East and Africa may try alternate routes through Bulgaria.

(Reporting by Angel Krasimirov; Editing by Tom Heneghan)

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