
VUCIC PRAISES PUTIN FOR 'STRENGTHENING' SERBIA'S MILITARY

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Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic has thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for "strengthening" the combat capability of the Balkan nation's armed forces.

Vucic made the comments on July 29 as he inspected the delivery of 10 recently arrived Russian armored patrol vehicles at a Serbian Army military base in Nis.

Speaking at the ceremony, Russia's Ambassador Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko said that Moscow "is ready and will always be ready for military and technical cooperation with Serbia."

Russia has been helping its ally beef up its military, raising concerns that it could threaten peace in the Balkans.

The 10 BRDM-2 reconnaissance vehicles have been delivered to Serbia despite neighboring Romania's refusal to let them transit via the Danube River because of European Union sanctions imposed on Russia for its actions in Ukraine.

Romania is a member of both the EU and NATO. Serbia claims military neutrality despite close ties with Russia, and formally wants to join the EU.

"The most important thing for us is that we managed to transport the vehicles to Serbia," Vucic told journalists. "How and which way they came, that is our business."

The armored vehicles were flown to Serbia on Russian transport planes last week, using Hungarian air space, according to media reports.

The delivery was part of the promised supply of 30 second-hand T-72 tanks and 30 BRDM-2 vehicles.

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