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Zapad'17 manoeuvres should be carefully monitored - BBN head

The forthcoming Russian-Belarusian Zapad'17 manoeuvres should be carefully monitored since they give rise to serious doubts regarding, for instance, the number of troops taking part, Pawel Soloch, the Polish National Security Bureau (BBN) head, has told PAP.

The manoeuvres, scheduled for September 14-20, are to engage 12,700 troops, including 3,000 Russians, and 370 military hardware units: 140 tanks, 150 artillery pieces and missile launchers as well as over 40 aircraft.

The British Guardian newspaper wrote recently that as many as 100,000 troops could take part in the exercise.

"This is at least a demonstration, a show of the efficiency and abilities of the Russian army to the West. Surely, the manoeuvres should be watched very closely", Soloch said on Wednesday.

"We know for sure that the Russian side is not presenting true and full data regarding the number of troops participating in the exercise. And this is where this discrepancy comes from", the BBN head went on, stressing that their number would surely exceed a dozen or so thousand.

According to Soloch, the forthcoming manoeuvres give rise to many doubts. He stressed that it was unclear, "whether or not Russian troops will remain in Belarus as a result of this exercise".

"Can this be an attempt to influence the situation in Ukraine, including acts of aggression?", he asked, adding that such concerns had been voiced by the Ukrainian side.

The BBN head said that this would be another Russian military exercise of an offensive character. "Movements of large military forces are planned. At any moment exercises can change into combat operations", he went on.

"We must monitor the manoeuvres and all accompanying operations, including information war exercises", Soloch concluded.

Source: PAP

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