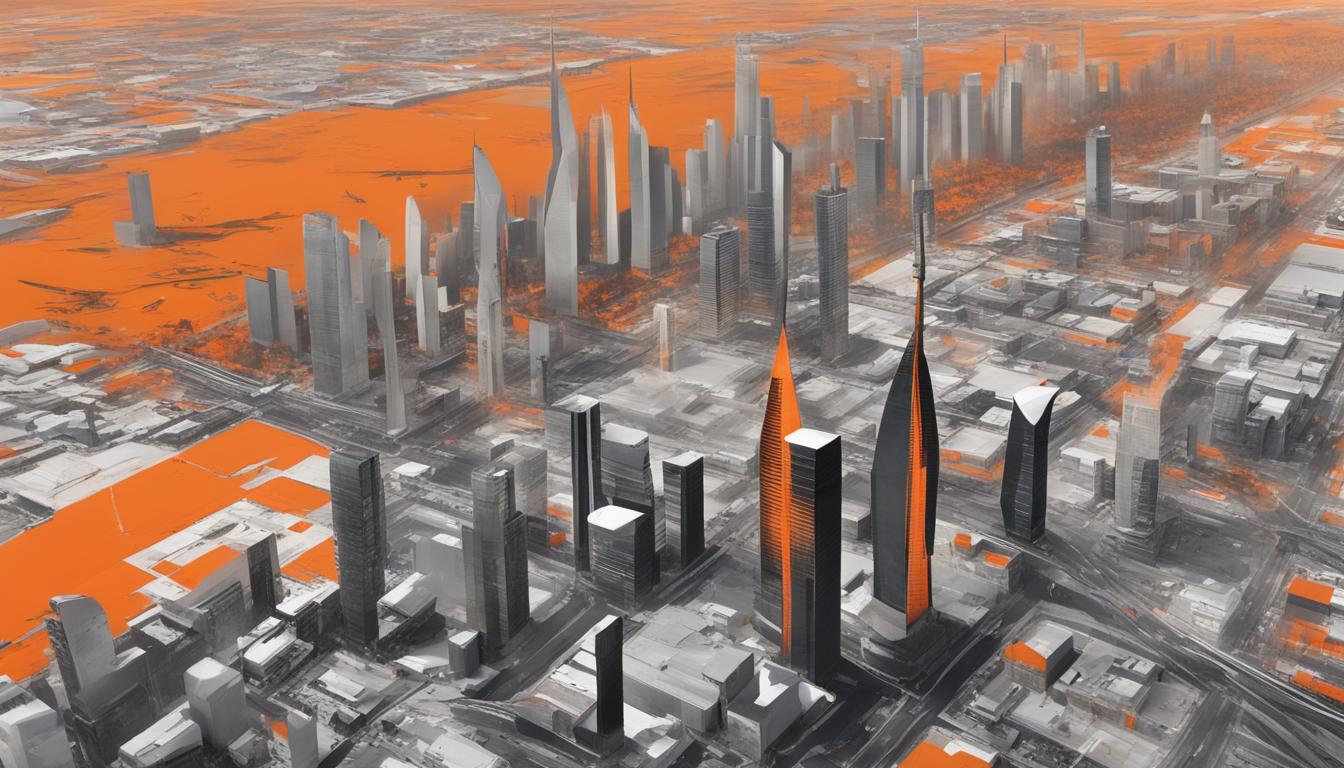
# NATO conducts large-scale military exercises in Estonia amidst rising tensions with Russia



NATO has conducted large-scale military exercises in Estonia near the Russian border, simulating a Russian invasion of Europe. These drills, named Exercise Swift Response, involved over 90,000 troops from all 32 NATO countries and are the largest conducted by the alliance since the Cold War. The exercises come amid heightened tensions due to Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022.

Brigadier Giles Harris emphasized the relevance of these exercises in the context of a potential Russian invasion, particularly for the Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—which have a history of Soviet occupation and face consistent provocations from Moscow. During the exercises, troops practiced responding to simulated attacks to test their readiness and improve coordination under pressure.

In parallel, Ukraine faces significant challenges as it contends with a renewed Russian offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba expressed concerns about insufficient military aid, lamenting the slow response from international allies. President Volodymyr Zelensky has signed new laws to increase troop numbers, including lowering the conscription age and allowing prisoners to join the army.

Russian forces have captured multiple settlements in Kharkiv, exacerbating the already urgent need for more military supplies from Western allies. This offensive aims to create a buffer zone rather than capture Kharkiv itself, according to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Nevertheless, the city has been subjected to intense bombardment, leading to further destruction and civilian casualties.

As the conflict intensifies, Ukraine's military is stretched thin, facing personnel shortages and insufficient air defenses. The U.S. has recently announced a $400 million aid package, but it is expected to take time before these supplies have an impact on the front lines. Thousands of Ukrainians have fled the draft since the invasion began, some risking their lives to cross into neighboring countries.

The situation remains dire, with ongoing battles and significant logistical challenges as Ukraine continues to defend against Russian advances.