

Navy Games Start; Linked With Syria

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Defense Ministry said it had started its largest naval exercises in years over the weekend, in war games analysts said would let it flex its military muscle and underline its interest in Syria, where Moscow has a Mediterranean base.

At least eight warships from Russia's Northern, Baltic and Black Sea fleets were taking part in the maneuvers in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, the ministry said.

The announcement did not mention Syria, but Andrei Frolov, a naval expert at Moscow military think tank CAST, said last week that the drill was probably meant to remind the West of Russia's links to Syria, where it has repeatedly argued against outside intervention in an uprising.

Moscow leases a naval maintenance and supply facility at the Syrian port of Tartous. Two Russian ships heading for the naval exercise picked up munitions on their way to Tartous, news agencies reported on Thursday.

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