

# Russia and Georgia Hold Joint Military Exercises

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia and Georgia are taking part in joint multinational biannual drills in the Black Sea along with four other states.

The two states are working together on the international Black Sea for drills despite chilly bilateral relations since their brief war in August 2008 over Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Warships from both counties left the Bulgarian port of Varna for the active phase of the exercise together with naval vessels from fellow member states Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine, said Russian Black Sea Fleet spokesman Vyacheslav Trukhachyov, RIA-Novosti reported.

They will take part in exercises covering joint defense, searches of ships suspected of involvement of drug and people smuggling as well as joint rescue operations.

The multilateral operation comes after Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili voiced concern last Thursday over Russia's large-scale, two-day drills in the Black Sea region in late March, both on the ground and in the water.

Saakashvili said that the March exercises showed that Russia "is abandoning its obligation not to attack Georgia," saying that Russia did not inform Georgia of the drills.

However, there are some signs that the relations between the neighboring countries are slowly warming. The countries had their first unmediated meeting in January in five years, according to RIA-Novosti.

On Friday, the Blackseafor vessels are due to arrive to the Romanian port of Constanta for the second part of the drills, running until April 23.

Blackseafor was established in 2001 on Turkey's initiative. It has no permanent headquarters, and its six member states take turns to lead the drills.

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