

Russia to Participate in China's Largest-Ever Joint Naval Drills

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BEIJING — China will join Russia later this week for its largest-ever naval drills with a foreign partner, underscoring deepening ties between the former Cold War rivals along with Beijing's desire for closer links with regional militaries.

China has long been a key customer for Russian military hardware, but only in the last decade have their militaries begun taking part in joint exercises.

China's Defense Ministry said Tuesday that its navy would send four destroyers, two guided missile frigates, and a support ship for the "Joint Sea-2013" exercises, which start Friday in the Sea of Japan and run through July 12. The ships departed Monday from the port of Qingdao, where China's Northern Fleet is based, headed for the rallying point in Peter the Great Bay near Vladivostok.

"This marks our navy's single biggest deployment of military force in a China-foreign joint

exercise," the ministry said.

Gen. Fang Fenghui, the People's Liberation Army chief of the general staff, announced the exercises during a visit to Moscow, where he met with his Russian counterpart, Valery Gerasimov. The two also announced that another round of joint anti-terrorism drills would be held in Russia's Ural Mountain region of Chelyabinsk from July 27 to Aug. 15.

In comments reported by the official Liberation Army Daily, Fang emphasized that outsiders should not consider the exercises threatening.

"The joint drill conducted by the two militaries of China and Russia do not target any third parties. Their aim is to deepen cooperation between the two militaries in the training field, boost capacity in coordinating military activities, and serve the purpose of safeguarding regional security and stability," Fang said.

China began deploying ships to the anti-piracy flotilla off the coast of Somalia in 2008 and in recent years its navy has joined in a series of joint drills in the Pacific and Indian oceans. Chinese land units also have taken part in border security and anti-terrorism exercises organized by the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Cooperation with the U.S. Navy, the predominant maritime force in the region, has been more limited, although China will take part next year in the U.S.-organized multinational Rim of the Pacific exercises, the world's largest maritime exercise.

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