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Russia Joins Hands With China for Anti-Terrorist Chopper Drills

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Chinese President Hu Jintao (L), Russian President Vladimir Putin (2d L), Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (C), and the Uzbek President Islam Karimov (2d R), stand next to a training-ground model during the "Peace Mission-2007."

Russian army helicopters have landed in northern China to take part in multinational anti-terrorism drills, underscoring continuing close ties between Beijing and Moscow despite tensions with the West over Ukraine.

Eight transport choppers landed Sunday night at Zhurihe, China's largest and most modern training base, located in the vast grasslands of Inner Mongolia, China's official Xinhua News Agency said Monday.

China and Russia have set aside their former Cold War rivalry and competition for regional influence to challenge the global order dominated by the U.S. and its allies in the West.

Western sanctions imposed on Russia over its annexation of Crimea and alleged support for insurgents in eastern Ukraine are seen as drawing Moscow and Beijing closer, providing

Russia with diplomatic cover and China with stronger leverage to acquire Russian natural resources.

Symbolic of Moscow's moves toward Beijing is a $400 billion deal signed in June to supply China with natural gas through a new pipeline. The deal came after decades of negotiations that went nowhere, with China reportedly receiving more favorable financial terms than Russia had initially been prepared to offer.

While urging negotiations to settle the Ukraine crisis, China has refrained from joining in the criticisms of Russia leveled by Washington and its European allies, including over the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 over Ukraine in July.

While Beijing officially eschews military alliances, it has conducted a series of drills with Russian forces, sometimes under the auspices of the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or SCO, a Central Asian grouping that is dominated by China and Russia and aims to challenge U.S. influence in Asia.

Russia is dispatching about 900 troops to take part in next week's "Peace Mission-2014" drills, which will involve more than 7,000 personnel, Xinhua said. Fellow SCO members Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are also participating.

Russia's Interfax-AVN military news agency cited Colonel Alexander Gordeyev of the Eastern Military Region as saying the Russian contingent in the exercises will include Mi-8 helicopters, Grad mobile rocket batteries, mine units and four Su-25 fighter jets.

Several SCO nations border on Afghanistan and Pakistan and face threats from radical Islamic insurgents, providing the impetus for joint anti-terrorism training.

See also:

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