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Russian Paratroopers to Train in 20 Foreign Countries This Year

By The Moscow Times

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Russian paratroopers march in Red Square during Paratroopers Day in Moscow.

Russian paratroopers will conduct exercises in 20 foreign countries this year, as Moscow continues to flaunt its resurgent military muscle amid a standoff with the West over Ukraine, a military spokesman said Monday.

“In the course of the Airborne Troops' international activity, meetings, exchanges and exercises will be held with the armed forces of about 20 countries around the world,” Airborne Troops spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Yevgeny Meshkov said in comments carried by news agency Interfax.

According to Meshkov, Russian paratroopers plan to train with special units throughout the former Soviet region, Europe, North Africa, South America and Southeast Asia this year.

Russian paratroopers last exercised abroad in November, when they dropped into Serbia —

Russia's historic slavic ally in the Balkans that borders NATO member Croatia.

“These exercises will feature the transport of airborne units over long distances in a variety of climates,” Meshkov said.

As Moscow pushes forward a 20 trillion ruble ($350 billion) military rearmament program, the Defense Ministry has taken pains to increase the preparedness of its forces by conducting more frequent field exercises. Media reports last year said Russia will hold a total of 4,000 exercises across all branches of the military this year — 1,000 more than last year.

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