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Russia To Fortify Western Flank Against NATO Exercises

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The Russian military will reinforce its positions in western and central Russia this year in response to a planned intensification of NATO exercises in 2016, ground forces commander Colonel-General Oleg Salyukov was quoted by news agency RIA Novosti as saying on Friday.

“In 2016, three divisions will be created in the western region, and one in the central region,” Salyukov told journalists, referring to two of the Russian military's strategic military commands bordering NATO countries.

Since the start of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Russia and the Western NATO military alliance have been gradually upping the ante — beefing up their force strengths in response to each other's moves.

The latest development is a continuation of this process, which some observers have warned might accidentally spark an armed confrontation between NATO and the Russian military, as both sides continue to run large-scale exercises to boost their respective combat readiness.

“The formation of the new divisions is one of the measures being used in response to the

intensification of exercises by NATO countries that have been observed lately," Salyukov said.

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