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Russia Holds Joint Naval Exercises With China in Baltic Sea

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Defense Ministry

Russia and China are holding their first joint naval exercises in the Baltic Sea, in a signal that the countries are bolstering military ties.

Three Chinese warships, including a destroyer, frigate and supply vessel are participating in the Joint Sea-2017, which entered their active phase on Tuesday, Baltic Fleet official Roman Martov told the TASS news agency.

The exercises conducted off the coast of Russia's Kaliningrad exclave will include live fire exercises and a drill to liberate a vessel captured by pirates.

The naval exercises come as NATO is bolstering deployments to the neighboring Baltic States ahead of Russian military exercises in Belarus in September.

Lithuania's deputy defense minister was cited by TASS as saying his country was closely monitoring Russian military activities in the region.

“Lithuania constantly observes the exercises taking place in our neighborhood,” Vytautas Umbrasas said.

"We hope that international maritime law will be observed during the drills and no obstacles to economic activity will emerge in the Baltic Sea," the deputy defense minister added.

Russia and China previously held joint naval exercises in Europe in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015.

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