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Russia Conducts Massive Military Drills in Crimea

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More than 100 Russian warplanes took part in military exercises in the annexed Crimean peninsula as NATO seeks to create a unified front against Russia's growing military capabilities.

Russia seized control of the Black Sea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, drawing Western economic sanctions. Russia has since bolstered Crimea's military defenses, including with two ground-to-air S-400 missile systems.

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Russian fighter jets, bombers and helicopters practiced defending a simulated enemy's warships and paratroopers, the Defense Ministry-run news channel Zvezda reported this

week.

“The jets carried out night-time air-to-air missile launches for the first time in the Black Sea waters last night,” Russian air defense force commander, Major General Viktor Sevostyanov, told Zvezda.

Combat helicopters also practiced clearing the coast for Russian paratroopers to land, the channels’ correspondent reported from the training range.

Meanwhile, NATO defense ministers have been meeting for the last two days to set out a plan to protect the North Atlantic against increased Russian naval strength, move troops more quickly across Europe and have more combat-ready battalions, ships and planes.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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