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Russia Started Large-Scale Air Drills in Annexed Crimea

By Reuters

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Over two thousand paratroopers landed at Naimanskaya military site near Black Sea on Thursday, July 11, as Russia staged large-scale aviation drills at the annexed Crimea peninsula.

Russian paratroopers were dropped from Il-76 transport planes 100 meters apart and landed on this site for the first time, according to Russian Military Transport Aviation Commander, Lieutenant General Vladimir Benediktov. On the whole forty military transport planes were involved in the drills.

The commander of Russian seventh division of airborne troops Andrei Sukhovetskiy said the landing was quite difficult.

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Russian air drills took place at the same time as Ukrainian and NATO marines continued their ground and sea drills in southern Ukraine as part of the joint multinational exercises known as "Sea Breeze 2019," expected to last until Friday, July 12.

Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 from Ukraine. The annexation prompted the United States and the European Union to impose sanctions on Russia, plunging Western relations with the Kremlin to their worst level since the Cold War. Western countries condemned the annexation.

Moscow says an overwhelming majority of Crimeans voted to become part of Russia in a 2014 referendum wanting protection from what the Kremlin cast as an illegal coup in Kiev.

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