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Massive Nuclear War Games Start in Russian Arctic

More than 12,000 troops are taking part in nuclear war games across Russia's arctic regions this week.

By The Barents Observer

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The nuclear-powered battle cruiser Pyotr Velikiy will be taking part in the exercises. **Russian Northern Fleet**

Swathes of Russia's arctic seas are closed off for huge nuclear war games taking place this week.

Five submarines, more than 100 aircraft, 200 missile launchers and 12,000 Russian troops will be taking part in the exercise, the Defense Ministry said Monday — the latest major drill testing the readiness of Russia's strategic nuclear forces.

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Civilian ships have been warned to stay clear of the area for the rest of the week, as submarines will be testing their ballistic missile firing capabilities.

Russia's flagship nuclear-powered battle cruiser Pyotr Velikiy is among the ships taking part.

“During the drills, cruise and ballistic missiles of various types will be launched, including against the Pemboi, Chizha and Kura firing ranges,” the Defense Ministry said.

The Pemboi test range in the north of Russia’s Komi Republic is traditionally used as a target for cruise missiles launched from aircraft. The Chizha test range is located in the north of Arkhangelsk Oblast on the Barents Sea, while the Kura range is on the other side of Russia in the Far East Kamchatka peninsula.

With the test taking place in both the European Arctic and in the Far East, ballistic missiles are set to fly both ways across the Arctic. In the European section, missile launches would likely take place both from a Delta-IV class submarine and a Borei-class submarine aiming at the Kura range, while missiles launched from Pacific Fleet submarines in the Far East will hit the Chizha test range in Russia’s western Arctic.

The drill comes as the United Nations continues to debate nuclear arms control and the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the U.S. and Russia, which limits the number of launchers and warheads, is due to expire in February 2021.

Russia has stressed the importance of prolonging the treaty, while the United States said they will not decide until next year whether to extend the treaty.

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