

Russian Navy Launches Caspian Sea Drills

February 17, 2022



Russian Defense Ministry

Russia's Navy has launched drills involving 20 warships in the Caspian Sea, the Defense Ministry [announced](#) Thursday.

Video [published](#) by the Defense Ministry shows the ships from the Caspian Fleet departing from their base in Makhachkala in the republic of Dagestan.

In addition to 20 warships, the drills will involve several small missile and small artillery ships as well as minesweepers and support vessels, the southern military district said in a statement published on the Defense Ministry website.

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Naval crews will perform combat training tasks in difficult environmental conditions and respond to various orders from the fleet's command post, the statement said.

“Artillery boat and minesweeper crews will carry out mining support tasks for the deployment of Caspian Fleet forces and defense against anti-submarine and sabotage [attacks] ... The Caspian Fleet sailors will search for mines using trawls and practice destroying them with live-firing from service weapons,” the statement said.

In the future, the fleet’s naval tactical groups will carry out joint actions including “sailing in a single marching order, repelling air attack weapons of a mock enemy and conducting mock naval combat, as well as perform practical rocket and artillery firing,” it added.

The Caspian Sea drills are part of the Russian Navy's larger naval drills currently being held in all waters bordering Russian territory as well as other “operationally important areas.”

The exercises are aimed at protecting “Russian national interests in the world ocean, as well as to counter military threats to the Russian Federation from the sea and ocean.”

Across all fleets, the naval exercises involve more than 140 warships and support vessels, over 60 aircraft, 1,000 pieces of military equipment and 10,000 servicemen.

Russia’s naval drills come amid unprecedented tensions between Russia and the West over Russia’s military build-up surrounding Ukraine, with Moscow’s naval exercises in the Black Sea sparking concerns of a naval blockade.

Russia has announced partial troop withdrawals from near the Ukrainian border this week, but these announcements have been met with [skepticism](#) by Ukraine and its Western allies.

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