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Russian Navy Ships Arrive in Myanmar for Joint Drills

By AFP

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Myanmar Military Information Team / AFP

A group of Russian warships arrived in Myanmar to join maritime exercises with the military junta's navy, state media in the Southeast Asia country reported Monday.

The Global New Light of Myanmar said four corvettes and a logistics vessel from Russia's Pacific Fleet arrived at Thilawa port in Yangon on Sunday "to join the second Myanmar-Russia joint maritime security exercise."

Russia's warships will conduct "harbor phase" exercises, the newspaper said, without providing further details.

On Sunday, the junta announced it would hold a live-fire maritime security exercise in the waters of the north Andaman Sea between Oct. 20 and Oct. 24.

It warned fishing boats and aircraft not to travel around the area but did not say if any Russian

ships or personnel were taking part in that exercise. Both navies held a combined drill in the Andaman Sea in November last year.

Along with China, Moscow is a close ally of the Myanmar junta, providing arms and diplomatic support as Myanmar's military struggles to crush armed opposition to its rule.

Related article: Russia's Navy Chief Kicks Off Myanmar Naval Drills

With its ground troops under pressure, the junta is increasingly reliant on its air force, which includes Russian Sukhoi Su-30s, MiG-29s and Yak planes, analysts say.

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has traveled to Russia several times since leading the 2021 coup, including for a meeting with President Vladimir Putin in 2022.

Russia has said it backs the generals' plan for new elections and the junta has in turn supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine, describing it as “justified.”

The United States has said any elections under the junta would be a “sham,” while analysts say polls would be targeted by the military's opponents and spark further bloodshed.

In August, the junta's other major ally China said it supported the military's plans for elections.

Earlier this month, sources close to the military told AFP that Min Aung Hlaing would travel to China in November in what would be his first known trip there since the coup.

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