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Russia Begins Naval Exercises With China and Iran in Gulf of Oman

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Russian Defense Ministry

Russia began joint naval exercises with China and Iran in the Gulf of Oman, Russia's Defense Ministry announced Sunday.

The drills, called Marine Security Belt 2025, aim to improve counter-piracy and terrorism operations at sea, as well as to ensure the security of maritime communications, according to a Russian military statement. The opening ceremony was held on Sunday.

Russia's Navy is represented by two corvettes — the Rezky and the Russian Hero Aldar Tsydenzhapov — along with the Pechenega tanker from the Pacific Fleet.

"Over the course of several days, participating crews in the northern Indian Ocean will conduct operations including the liberation of hijacked vessels, search and rescue missions and live-fire artillery drills against maritime and aerial targets," the statement said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said this is the seventh Marine Security Belt exercise since 2018.

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Iran's Tasnim news agency reported that the drills would start on Tuesday in the port of Chabahar, though it did not specify their duration. In February, Iran conducted similar exercises in the area to "strengthen defense capabilities against any threat."

"Warships and combat and support vessels of the Chinese and Russian naval forces, as well as the warships of Iran's naval forces of the army and the Revolutionary Guards," Tasnim wrote.

The drills aim to "strengthen security in the region and expand multilateral cooperation between participating countries," according to the news agency.

China sent a guided-missile destroyer and supply ship from the 47th naval escort task force to take part in the exercises, the South China Morning Post reported on Sunday.

Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka will attend as observers.

AFP contributed reporting.

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