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Kamchatka Tour Firms Say Surprise Military Drills Costing Industry Over $600K

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Avacha Bay off the coast of Kamchatka. **Yelena Vereshchaka / TASS**

Tour firms in Russia's Far East say military drills off the Kamchatka Peninsula are costing them tens of millions of rubles in lost revenue due to closures of key maritime routes during peak tourist season.

The Kamchatka Tourism Industry Association (KTIA) said Tuesday that naval exercises by the Russian military have already led to more than 50 million rubles (over $635,000) in losses for local businesses.

Russia's Defense Ministry announced that the naval drills, involving 40 warships, 30 aircraft and more than 5,000 troops in the Pacific Ocean, would run from June 16 to June 30.

But KTIA said vessel traffic had been halted and Avacha Bay, a major area for sightseeing cruises, had been closed since last Friday without warning to operators.

“People usually book tours three or four months in advance. We didn’t know about the drills until we were suddenly told the sea was closed,” KTIA chairwoman Yelena Lassal told the Telegram news channel Govorit Nemoskva.

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Tour companies estimate they are losing at least 50 million rubles per week due to the disruption, while also facing potential lawsuits from tourists and being forced to issue refunds and pay fines for canceled trips.

The KTIA warned that the closures are hitting the local economy hard. Boat tours are a key source of income for the region’s travel industry, which relies heavily on the short summer season to cover operational costs like fuel, maintenance and taxes.

“Every day of good weather in high season is worth its weight in gold,” KTIA said in a statement.

Lassal said some companies tried to implement security protocols such as passenger screening to allow trips to continue, but were still denied permission by the military.

“Around 500 tourists were stuck on boats for five hours today, waiting for clearance that never came,” she said.

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