

Russian Warships Stage Black Sea Drills Ahead of U.S. Arrivals

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The drills follow Turkey's announcement that the United States had notified it of plans to send two warships to the area. **Kremlin.ru**

The Russian Navy has launched drills in the Black Sea ahead of two U.S. warships' reported arrival in the area amid tensions over Russia's massive troop buildup near Ukraine, state media [reported](#) Wednesday.

Russia's Black Sea Fleet deployed a frigate, minesweeper, three corvettes and an unspecified number of landing ships to navigate simulated minefields, according to the TASS news agency.

Related article: [U.S. to Send 2 Warships to Black Sea Amid Russia-Ukraine Tension, Turkey Says](#)

"At sea, the ships' crews will individually and jointly test fire artillery on surface and air targets," the Black Sea Fleet was quoted as saying.

The maneuvers were also reported to involve naval aviation aircraft and helicopters, as well as air defense units.

The Black Sea drills follow Turkey's announcement that the United States had notified it of plans to send two warships to the area this Wednesday and Thursday.

They also come the day after Russia's defense minister said its troop buildup that has worried Ukraine and its Western allies was part of [two-week readiness exercises](#).

Kiev estimates that Russia has deployed 41,000 troops near Ukraine's eastern border and 42,000 in annexed Crimea.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said two armies and three airborne formations have been deployed in response to NATO's threatening activities near Russia.

Russian Security Council chief Nikolai Patrushev, echoing Shoigu, said Wednesday that Russia amassed its military near Ukraine in response to "increased NATO and especially U.S. activity in near proximity to Russian borders."

Last month, the Black Sea Fleet said it deployed all six of its submarines as NATO kicked off drills in the area.

The Russian military had announced some 4,000 drills throughout the month of April as part of so-called "winter period control checks."

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