

Russia Announces Start of Baltic Sea Naval Drills

By [AFP](#)

August 02, 2023



The Odintsovo small missile ship of the Russian Navy's Baltic Fleet. **Valentin Yegorshin / TASS**

Russia announced Wednesday that it had begun naval exercises in the Baltic Sea, amid rising tensions with its European neighbors over the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia regularly holds naval drills in the Baltic Sea, often in response to NATO exercises in the area.

The Russian Navy has played a key role in Moscow's assault on Ukraine by pummeling the Western-backed country with ship- and submarine-launched cruise missiles, among other weapons.

"The Ocean Shield-2023 naval exercises have begun in the Baltic Sea," the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

It added that 30 warships and boats as well as 20 support vessels would participate alongside

some 6,000 military personnel.

During the drills, the Navy will practice how to protect sea lanes, transport troops and military cargo, and defend the coastline, the statement said.

"In total, it is planned to perform more than 200 combat exercises, including with the use of weapons," it said.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/02/russia-announces-start-of-baltic-sea-naval-drills-a8203>

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