

France holds war games with Qatar, UAE

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, February 23, 2008

AFP 23 February 2008

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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ABU DHABI - France, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates began joint military exercises involving land, sea and air forces in the UAE on Saturday, the official WAM news agency reported.

The military training, which will last for several days and whose exact location was not disclosed, is part of the Gulf Shield manoeuvres held regularly by France and the UAE, WAM added.

A total of 1,500 French, 2,500 Emirati and 1,300 Qatari troops are involved in the exercises, the French defence ministry website said.

The two countries signed a defence agreement following the 1991 Gulf War but this is the first time Qatar has taken part in the exercises, WAM added.

The pact, concluded in 1995, allows for regular joint manoeuvres by units from the two countries' armed forces with previous exercises held in 1996, 2000 and 2005. This year's war games are being held in both Qatar and the UAE, WAM said.

France reached agreement during President Nicolas Sarkozy's January visit to the region to create a military base in the UAE for between 400 and 500 French army, navy and air force personnel.

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