

NATO Begins Military Drills Near Russian Border

Troops from 14 countries, including the United States, Sweden, Finland, and Ukraine, are participating in massive exercises in Estonia.

By [Al Mayadeen](#)

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On Monday, large-scale NATO military training began in Estonia. According to the military alliance, the ‘Hedgehog 2022’ exercise is one of the largest in the Baltic nation’s history. The drills will involve 15,000 troops from 14 countries, including members of the military blocs as well as their partners.

Soldiers from Finland, Sweden, Georgia, and Ukraine will take part in [the exercise](#), according to the Finnish public radio *Yle*. According to the broadcaster, the drills will encompass all branches of the armed forces and will entail air, sea, and land exercises, as well as cyber warfare training.

According to a NATO statement, the drills would also include the participation of the US Navy Wasp-class landing ship ‘Kearsarge.’ Both the military bloc and the deputy commander of the Estonian Defense Forces, Major General Veiko-Vello Palm, have denied that the maneuvers near the Russian border had anything to do with Moscow’s continuing military operation in Ukraine.

The drills began barely a day after Finland and Sweden officially announced their intentions to [join NATO](#), and were planned long before the war in Ukraine erupted, according to Western sources.

However, the [drills in Estonia](#) are only one component of NATO’s large-scale military activities near the Russian border. Lithuania, another Baltic state, is hosting the ‘Iron Wolf’ exercise, which includes 3,000 NATO troops and 1,000 pieces of military equipment, including German Leopard 2 tanks.

NATO exercises in Poland

According to a NATO statement issued on Friday, two of NATO’s largest exercises -

'Defender Europe' and 'Swift Response' - are taking place in Poland and eight other countries, involving 18,000 troops from 20 nations.

"Exercises like these show that NATO stands strong and ready to protect our nations and defend against any threat," the military bloc's spokesperson, **Oana Lungescu**, said, adding that the drills "help to remove any room for miscalculation or misunderstanding about our resolve to protect and defend every inch of allied territory."

The [NATO Response Force](#) is now participating in the 'Wettiner Heide' drills in Germany with a force of 7,500 people. The 'Neptune series' naval drills featuring the USS 'Harry S. Truman' carrier strike group, which will be placed under NATO command, are scheduled to take place in the Mediterranean Sea.

However, according to NATO, this will be only the second time since the Cold War's conclusion that a US carrier group has been brought under the military bloc's direction.

In June, the Baltic States and Poland will host what NATO describes as "Europe's largest integrated air and missile defense exercise," which would involve 23 nations.

NATO naval drills

Finland held NATO naval drills in late April. It is now also hosting a joint land exercise in which forces from the United States, the United Kingdom, Estonia, and Latvia are taking part.

Massive [military drills](#) are taking place amid rising tensions between Russia, NATO, and some of the military alliance's allies. Finland, which shares a lengthy border with Russia, and Sweden agreed to reexamine their long-standing policy of non-alignment in the aftermath of the war on Ukraine.

The announcement provoked a surge of condemnation from Moscow, which warned that if [Finland and Sweden](#) joined NATO, it would have to respond. Moscow also thinks that NATO expansion is a direct danger to national security.

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Articles by: **Al Mayadeen**

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