

Threat to Russia? Ukraine-NATO Military Drills

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KIEV — Ukraine-NATO Sea Breeze military exercises will begin in Ukraine's Black Sea region later on Monday.

The land phase of the drills, which will focus on fighting sea piracy, will be held at a military training area in the Nikolayev region, while the sea drills will take place in northwestern Black Sea.

The exercises will be held until July 23. Ukraine will be represented by a naval infantry battalion and five Coast Guard vessels.

Sea Breeze drills have been conducted in Ukraine since 1997 and involve troops from NATO countries on rotation basis.

In 2009, the Ukrainian parliament defied then-President Viktor Yushchenko and refused to approve the exercises. This year, Ukrainian lawmakers voted in favor of the drills, which will see the participation of some 3,000 military personnel from at least 15 countries.

Ukraine will also host this year a series of other international military and peacekeeping exercises, including Ukrainian-U.S. Rapid Trident 2010, Ukrainian-Romanian Cossack Steppe 2010 and Ukrainian-Polish-Lithuanian-Canadian Maple Arch 2010.

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