

RUSSIA IN EUROPE: MAY 1-JUNE 14 2016

KEY TAKEAWAY: Russia heightened its military posture in Europe by projecting its land, air and naval capabilities. The Russian Ministry of Defense announced on May 4 that it would create three new combined-arms divisions in the Western and Southern military districts, with a second announcement on June 3 specifying that these would include moving two motorized infantry brigades to its Western borders with Belarus and Ukraine. The Russian announcement was likely a response to proposed NATO plans to deploy multinational NATO battalions to the Baltic States and Poland, which were first announced as a possible course of action in April. Russia further reasserted itself through the movement of advanced naval equipment to the Black and Mediterranean Seas and continued violation of Baltic and Polish airspace. Russia also announced plans to boost its defensive capabilities through the installation of an additional S-300 air defense system in Belarus and an upgrade to the 'Bereg' coastal defense artillery system on the Black Sea. Russia will continue demonstrating its military capabilities over the next few months, as it plans to conduct a surge of military exercises June-October during its annual summer training period. These measures allow Russia to increase its military posture and position key capabilities along its Western border without crossing the threshold that would provoke an armed NATO response under Article 5.

Russia also continued to threaten NATO members and partners with retaliatory action for increased NATO presence in Europe. In response to the installation of European missile shield components in Romania and Poland, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that these countries could find themselves in Russia's "cross-hairs." Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that Russia would not use military action against a NATO member state, with the key caveat of "unless provoked." These statements allow Russia to maintain its defensive stance while setting conditions that could legitimize aggressive action. Meanwhile, NATO member states and non-NATO partners launched the ten-day Anaconda 2016 joint military exercise, the largest war game undertaken in Europe since the end of the Cold War.



POLITICAL ACTIVITY

- ★ **10, 19 MAY:** Montenegro signed a protocol with NATO on its accession to the organization. Montenegro will participate in all NATO meetings as an observer until all NATO nations ratify its accession. Russia's "United Russia" party signed a declaration with two opposition parties in Montenegro calling for a union of neutral states in the Balkans the previous week, likely in an effort to undermine Montenegrin unity ahead of the NATO decision.
- ★ **13 MAY:** U.S. President Barack Obama met with the heads of state of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland at a White House Summit to discuss security in Europe, including issues related to Russian military aggression.
- ⚡ **13 MAY:** German domestic intelligence services have announced that Russian intelligence agencies were likely responsible for a major cyber-attack on the German lower house of parliament in May 2015.
- ★ **17, 19 MAY:** The Russian parliament delayed the ratification of an agreement made between Russia and Estonia in February 2014 regarding their shared border. Russian Ambassador to Estonia Aleksander Petrov explained that this agreement was made during a more "optimistic" period, signaling an erosion of the two countries' relations.
- ⚡ **13, 18, 20 MAY:** Poland warned that Russian intelligence services may target the upcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw. Polish intelligence officers arrested and charged Mateusz Piskorski, leader of the pro-Russian Zmiana party, with espionage. Polish Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz stated that Russian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) violated Polish airspace.
- ★ **25 MAY:** Sweden's government ratified a NATO cooperation agreement allowing NATO troops greater ability to operate in Sweden. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov previously stated that Russia would be "compelled to take action" if Sweden became a NATO member.
- 👤 **27 MAY:** Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Greek President Prokopios Pavlopoulos in Athens to discuss bilateral relations related to economic, security and energy cooperation.

MILITARY ACTIVITY

- 🚢 **02-22 MAY:** Russia increased its military activity in the Baltic Sea region. NATO fighters participating in the Baltic Air Policing Mission scrambled to intercept Russian aircraft operating in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian airspace. The Russian Baltic Fleet performed amphibious landing training exercises on May 21 and 22.
- 👤 **03-20 MAY:** U.S. Troops took part in the Dragon Pioneer 2016 joint military exercise with the Moldovan army. Five hundred Russian troops undertook exercises in the Russian-backed separatist territory of Transnistria in eastern Moldova.
- 🚢 **04 MAY, 03 JUNE:** Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu announced the establishment of three new military divisions by the end of 2016, two in Russia's Western Military District and one in the Southern Military District. Russia will move two motorized infantry brigades to its Western border and has increased air defense capabilities in the Southern Military District.
- 🚢 **05, 25, 31 MAY:** The Russian missile frigate 'Ladny' and the patrol ship 'Pitlivy' will be transferred from the Black Sea Fleet to Russia's Mediterranean Squadron. Russia launched the 'Kolpino,' a Varshavyanka-class diesel-electric submarine capable of being equipped with Kalibr (SS-N-27 Sizzler) missiles, which will join the Black Sea Fleet.
- 🚢 **05 MAY, 08 JUN:** Russia delivered the military-technical equipment for a fourth anti-aircraft battalion armed with S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Belarus. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko discussed the possibility of constructing Russian air bases in Belarus.
- 🚢 **12-13, 27 MAY:** The U.S. announced that its European missile defense shield in Romania is now operational and that construction of another missile defense unit would begin in Poland. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Romania and Poland's decision to host the missile defense shield places them in Russia's "cross-hairs."
- ★ **16 MAY:** Turkey and Ukraine signed a military cooperation agreement between the two countries to facilitate mutual reform efforts, defense planning, military education, troop training, and advisory assistance.
- 🚢 **21 MAY:** The Russian Ministry of Defense announced its intention to repair and upgrade the mobile 'Bereg' coastal defense artillery systems for use in Utash, Krasnodar, which divides the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov, north of the Russian port of Novorossiysk.
- 🚢 **28 MAY:** The Lithuanian Defense Ministry announced that it will pursue the acquisition of medium-range missile defense systems NASAMS from the Norwegian government, which would allow for greater defensive range against enemy aircraft, cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).
- 👤 **01 JUNE:** The Russian Defense Ministry announced it will undertake 2,000 exercises across its armed forces that will take place during the summer training period between June 01 – Oct 2016. Russia's Strategic Missile Forces will carry out more than 50 drills, 30% of which will be snap exercises.
- 🚢 **06 JUNE:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that Russia would not attack a NATO member state "unless provoked."
- 👤 **06 JUNE:** NATO member states and non-NATO partners launched Anaconda 2016 in Poland, a ten day series of military exercises that will involve 31,000 troops. The exercises simulate the defense of Eastern Europe.
- 🚢 **08 JUNE:** The Russian Kilo-class diesel-electric submarine 'Stary Oskol' was intercepted by British and allied NATO forces as it surfaced while approaching the English Channel.