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Russian Siberian Military Drills Largest Since the End of the Cold War

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The snap military exercises in Russia's Eastern Military District, [ordered by President Vladimir Putin on the evening of July 12](#), [1] are the largest in Russia since the Soviet period, reported Russia Today, and may even be the largest anywhere since the end of the Cold War. According to various Russian press reports and statements from the Defense Ministry, 160,000 troops from all branches of the service are involved. Even TU-95 Bear strategic bombers based in the Amur region are involved, having been ordered to full combat readiness on Sunday. "The main goal of the drills is to check the readiness of units to carry out their missions, and to assess the quality of their training and technical preparedness," the Defense Ministry said in a statement on Saturday, reported RIA Novosti.



TU-95 Bears fly in formation, 2012. Photo: russavial.

Depending on which report you read, this is either the third or the fourth such exercise since Sergei Shoigu was appointed defense minister last November. Some 160,000 troops, with up to 5,000 tanks and other armored vehicles, 130 aircraft of all types, as well as 70 naval vessels are involved. Commanders in the Eastern District were unaware of plans to hold the exercises until they received their orders in secret parcels overnight on July 12-13, but had begun preparations to move towards their

training areas by the morning of the July 13. According to the Defense Ministry, some units, including units from the Central Military District will have to move as far as 3,000 kilometers from their usual training grounds. Ground forces have two days to reach their exercise sites, some by ground, others moving by air. They are being covered by jet fighters from the air force, which is also providing air cover for the ferry routes from the mainland to Sakhalin Island. The Pacific Fleet has been divided into six task forces, which are carrying out anti-submarine and search and rescue exercises in the Sea of Okhotsk.

Chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov, himself, traveled out to the 68th

Army Corps, headquartered in Sakhalin, to oversee the exercise. Channel One TV reported that President Putin, who has called the previous snap exercises "extremely useful and effective in terms of identifying problems and their subsequent removal," will personally visit two of the training locations, one in the Transbaikal region and the other in Sakhalin, on July 16 and 17. The current exercise continues until July 20, with peak activity being reached tomorrow and the 17th.

Links:

[1] <http://larouhepac.com/node/27352>

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