

Russia, China Start Biggest Military Drill Since Cold War

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The Vostok 2018 exercise will be held from Sept. 11 to 17 in Russia's Eastern Military District, a sparsely populated district close to country's borders with China and Mongolia.

The Vostok 2018 exercise by the Russian military is witnessing the biggest military drill by the country in 37 years. Around 300,000 troops and tens of thousands of vehicles, aircraft, and warships are participating along with units from China in the exercise.

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The exercise kicked off on Tuesday along with a bilateral meeting between Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The meeting looks forward to strengthening ties between the two countries amidst [U.S.-led sanction against Russia](#) and a [growing U.S.-China trade war](#).

Putin said Moscow has a "trusting relationship" with Beijing "in politics, security, and defense." His Chinese counterpart commented that both countries would continue to "make joint efforts to... push the China-Russia relationship up to a new

height.”

Forum in Vladivostok. Reuters

The three days meeting of the Easters Economic Forum in Vladivostok brought together the leaders of Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea along with 5,000 delegates from 60 countries.

The exercise is meant to test the capability of the Russian military. To this effect, the drill will include around 300,000 Russian soldiers and officers, including 6,000 airborne troops, over 1,000 warplanes, helicopters and drones, about 36,000 armor, and 80 combat and support ships. Compared to that, China's participation seems minuscule with only 3,200 troops and 30 aircraft.

In a statement in August, Gen. Sergi Shoigu, supreme commander-in-chief of the Russian armed forces, said the games would be at an "unprecedented scale both in territory and number of troops involved."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the drills were justified given "aggressive and unfriendly" attitudes towards Russia by the NATO block.

The first two days of the drill will see planning and preparation while the actual events will start on Thursday and continue till the last day. The exercise will be spread across five army training grounds, four airbases and areas in the Sea of Japan, Bering Straits and Sea of Okhotsk.

NATO spokesperson Dylan White said that the military organization has been briefed about the exercise in May and it would monitor it. "Vostok demonstrates Russia's focus on exercising large-scale conflict. It fits into a pattern we have seen over some time: a more assertive Russia, significantly increasing its defense budget and its military presence."
