
Russia to respond to NATO Black Sea force by deploying new weapons - report

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The military is planning to test the fresh forces, infrastructure and weapons deployed to the regions bordering the Black Sea in the headquarters exercise Caucasus-2016, scheduled for September, the sources told Novaya Gazeta daily. The exercise will include joint use of various forces in the Caucasus Mountains and on the Black Sea, they added.

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The plans to reinforce Russia's southwestern borders must be tied with NATO's plans to boost its military presence in the region, as well as with its constant effort aimed at increasing the combat abilities of the Ukrainian Army, the newspaper suggested after receiving the sources' information.

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Novaya Gazeta's military expert, Navy Captain Oleg Shvedkov said that despite the fact that combined strength of NATO forces and their allies will be more than the one of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, deploying more aircraft and missiles to the region would successfully negate the new threat.

Chief spokesman of the Black Sea Fleet, Captain Vyacheslav Trukhachov, told reporters that over 15 new Russian combat ships arrived to the Black Sea in 2015 alone. Of these, two missile carriers and two submarines are equipped with the most modern cruise missiles Kalibr-NK with the effective range of up to 3,000km that have recently proved their effectiveness in strikes on terrorists' positions in Syria.

The press service of Russia's Southern Military District added that the units deployed in the Northern Caucasus and Rostov Region are equipped with combat aircraft capable of controlling the whole territory of the Black Sea. In addition, the district possesses two brigades of Iskander-M ballistic missiles that have effective range of 500km and can penetrate any of the existing missile defense systems, the press service added.

In August 2015, Ukraine hosted a military exercise in the Black Sea with NATO forces, involving 2,500 troops and some 150 military vehicles, from warships and helicopters to armored cars. Back then, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement criticizing the war games and the US military presence on Ukrainian territory as a violation of the Minsk Accords – the treaty and roadmap aimed at peaceful settlement of the conflict in Donbass in the east.
