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Russia, China will hold joint naval drills in Sea of Japan

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Russian and Chinese naval forces have reportedly planned a major joint military exercise in the Sea of Japan in the upcoming week.

A Chinese naval fleet of seven warships is on its way to Vladivostok to take part in what has been described as its largest-ever foreign joint naval drill with Russia, due to be held July 5-12, RT reported Tuesday.

"This marks our navy's single biggest deployment of military force in a China-foreign joint exercise," the Chinese Defense Ministry said as cited in the report.

According to the report, the Chinese Navy has dispatched four guided missile destroyers, two guided missile frigates, a supply ship, three ship-borne helicopters and a special operation detachment from the port of Qingdao in eastern China.

Nearly 20 warships and more than 10 aircraft and helicopters are to take part in the naval maneuvers, which will begin in Peter the Great Bay near the city of Vladivostok in Eastern Russia.

During the drills, the Russian and Chinese navies plan to "practice liberating a ship seized by pirates" and conduct search-and-rescue operations, said Roman Martov, a spokesman for Russia's Pacific Fleet, as cited in the report.

They will also practice organizing joint air defense, anti-submarine and anti-ship defense, it adds.

Meanwhile, China's Xinhua News Agency further cited Chief of the General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Fang Fenghui as emphasizing that the drills are not intended to target any third party.

The exercises are "meant to strengthen cooperation between the two armed forces in military training, enhance their capability in coordinating military operations, so that they can play a positive role in safeguarding regional security and stability," Fang reportedly said on Monday, during a visit to Moscow, where he met with his Russian counterpart, Valery Gerasimov.

Russia and China have regularly held joint naval drills since 2005 within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

In recent years, the Chinese navy has participated in a series of joint naval drills in the Pacific and Indian oceans, while Chinese ground forces have taken part in land military exercises organized by the SCO.