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<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/08/04/373990/russia-launches-aerial-military-drill/>

Russia launches aerial war games

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Russia has launched aerial war games in the country's central and western districts, a Russian air force spokesman says.

Igor Klimov said the five-day drill began on Monday and would include aircraft such as Su-27 and MiG-31 fighter jets, bomber Su-34, as well as Mi-8, Mi-24 and Mi-28N helicopters.

The drill will be testing “aircraft weapons on land and air targets on new ranges, and will be conducting real and electronic launches of anti-aircraft missiles in Ashuluk (Astrakhan region in southern Russia) which is specifically designed to aid the coordination between aviation and anti-missile defense,” said Klimov.

Klimov added that the drills are planned to continue until August 8 and the exercises were the first in a series to improve coordination in the military.

The Russian drill comes amid the crisis in neighboring Ukraine, where government forces are fighting pro-Russians in the eastern regions bordering Russia.

The Russian Rostov region, which shares borders with Ukraine, has recently seen numerous shells hitting the area, fired from the Ukrainian side. On July 13, artillery shells from Ukraine hit the area, killing a 46-year-old man and seriously injuring two others.

Ukraine’s mainly Russian-speaking regions in the east have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Russia protesters and the Ukrainian army since the government in Kiev launched military operations in mid-April in a bid to crush the pro-Russia protests. The United Nations (UN) says at least 1,129 people have been killed in the military campaign.

The fighting has intensified in east Ukraine since July 17, when a Malaysian airliner, carrying 298 people, was downed in the Donetsk region. Western powers accuse pro-Russia forces of downing the civilian airliner. The pro-Russians deny any involvement and blame the Ukrainian army for the incident.