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<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/02/12/397301/Russia-Venezuela-to-hold-joint-drills>

Russia, Venezuela to hold naval drills in Caribbean: Source

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File photo of Russian nuclear-powered cruiser Pyotr Veliky

The navies of Russia and Venezuela are planning to hold joint military drills in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea, near US territorial waters, a source says.

The military exercise is scheduled to take place in the second half of the year and will involve a unit of Russia's Northern Fleet ships and Venezuela's Air Force planes, Interfax-AVN news agency quoted an unnamed military-diplomatic source as saying on Thursday.

Russia's missile carrying nuclear cruiser, Pyotr Veliky (Peter the Great), as well as support vessels will take part in the military maneuvers, the source said.

"Russian and Venezuelan naval crews are expected to practice force deployment efforts in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea and hold joint tactical maneuvers in formations and air defense drills," the source said, adding that details of the exercises will be finalized in March.

The military maneuvers mark the second time that a Russian fleet will be in the area since the end of the Cold War.

In December 2008, the Russian Northern Fleet's Pyotr Veliky and large anti-submarine ship Admiral Chabanenko took part in a military exercise, dubbed VenRus-2008, with Venezuela's navy in the Caribbean Sea.

Earlier, Russia announced that its Navy would build up a constant presence throughout the world's oceans.

Russia's defense capabilities

On February 10, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, said Moscow plans to improve defensive capabilities amid rising threats from the US and its allies.

Patrushev said the US and its allies have opted for the path of confrontation with the Russian Federation, reminding that history shows Moscow will never be intimidated by the West's threats.

The Moscow-West relations have cooled sharply after Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea joined the Russian Federation following a referendum in March 2014.

Relations were strained further after Ukraine launched military operations in April 2014 to silence the pro-Russia protests in Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking regions of Lugansk and Donetsk in the east.

Kiev and its Western allies accuse Moscow of supporting pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine, saying the Russian intervention poses a security threat to Ukraine and all other neighboring states. Russia categorically denies the allegation.