

'Largest Ever' NATO Exercise to Rehearse Russian Attack on Europe

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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[Zero Hedge](#)

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A massive NATO military exercises slated to run all the way through the end of May has kicked off. Exercise Steadfast Defender 24 is being hailed as the largest NATO exercises since the Cold War. Some 90,000 troops from all 31 members states will take part.

Also, Sweden - which is on the cusp of formally entering the alliance after Turkish parliament belatedly signed off - is expected to sent troops and equipment.

"The Alliance will demonstrate its ability to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic area via trans-Atlantic movement of forces from North America," a NATO statement said.

The focus of the exercises is to improve readiness for deploying NATO assets on a rapid and large scale from North America and other parts in order to defend Europe from an invasion.

Russian media has denounced the planned drills as essentially a rehearsal of war against the Russian state.

For example according to Russian state-linked TASS,

"NATO is making it absolutely clear that the maneuvers will be aimed at practicing moves to wage a direct, head-to-head confrontation with Russia as the bloc ups the ante amid abysmal failure by its proxy army in Ukraine."

Russian military analysts are also decrying the drills as a next major step in NATO and Moscow escalation.

"A situation where an enemy is being conjured up is leading directly to a revival of the

very idea of maintaining NATO as a counterweight [to that purported threat]," Viktor Mizin, an analyst at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO RAS), told [Izvestia](#). "In addition, this will inevitably result in increased defense spending."

Even US state-linked [VOA News](#) has underscored in its initial coverage of the drills, "The exercise is designed to simulate the 31-nation alliance's response to an attack from a rival like Russia.

Throughout almost two years of conflict in Ukraine, hawks in the West have not infrequently warned that President Putin seeks to expand the war elsewhere into Eastern Europe as well; however, there's been no evidence that this is going to happen.

The drills are expected to play out even up to NATO's eastern flank, close to the Russian border, and also will involve at least 80 aircraft and over 1,100 combat vehicles, along with about 50 naval vessels from several member states.

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