

Provocation? NATO War Games On Russian Border. “Exercise in Areas that are a 30-second jet flight from Russia’s border”

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WASHINGTON: The United States and its European allies are set to begin military exercises near Russia’s western borders Saturday, a training operation that has raised hackles in Moscow but will be observed by a Russian Defense Ministry delegation.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will hold its Steadfast Jazz 2013 exercise primarily in Poland and the former Soviet republic of Latvia, a training that will include some 6,000 troops from the Western military alliance and partner nations.

The exercise, NATO’s largest since 2006, is based on a “fictitious scenario in a fictitious country” and will include land, air, maritime and special operations forces, according to the alliance.

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Officials in Moscow have long opposed NATO’s eastward expansion, which has brought former Warsaw Pact countries into the alliance’s fold along with former Soviet Baltic republics Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

In late July, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov criticized what he described as the “Cold War” spirit of the NATO exercise.

The Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita reported in June that parts of the planned exercise would take place in areas that are a 30-second jet flight from Russia’s borders.

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