

Russia Holds Black Sea Military Drills ‘Under NATO’s Watchful Eye’

By [Global Research](#)

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NOVOROSIISK — The Russian Black Sea Fleet practiced an amphibious landing of troops on the coast of Abkhazia as a nearby NATO vessel observed, a Russian Navy source said on Wednesday.

He said the drills, involving a dozen warships, were conducted on February 27 in close cooperation with the coast guard forces of the former Georgian republic of Abkhazia and were watched by a U.S. coast guard vessel.

“During the drills, the USS John Hall was in this area of the Black Sea,” the source said, adding that the U.S. vessel was officially conducting joint drills with Georgian Navy coast guards vessels.

“However, the main task of the American vessel in the Black Sea was not the practice of Georgian-American interaction on the sea, but in tracking the drills of the Black Sea fleet,” the source added.

Last month, the presidents of Russia and Abkhazia signed a deal allowing a Russian military base in Abkhazia for 50 years to “protect Abkhazia’s sovereignty and security, including against international terrorist groups.”

Georgia, which fought a five-day war with Russia over its former republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in August 2008, has fiercely criticized the plans for the base in Abkhazia, which it considers part of its territory.

Russia’s military buildup in the region since the armed conflict has also been condemned by the West as running counter to international law and contravening the internationally brokered ceasefire agreement signed by Russia and Georgia in the wake of their August 2008 conflict.

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