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## Russia Holds Rival Baltic Exercises in Response to NATO

By Jason Ditz

June 12, 2014

Russia was notably annoyed by NATO's 4,700 troops and 800 vehicles in Latvia and Lithuania conducting the "Sabre Strike" wargames, which Latvian officials publicly said were targeted at Russia, and which began Monday.

Not to be outdone in the ongoing game of one-upmanship, Russia has begun its own wargames in the Baltic, in their exclave of Kaliningrad. 16 Russian aircraft, 24 warships, and an unspecified number of paratroopers are confirmed to be taking part.

Having two rival military maneuvers taking place in close proximity is likely to add to tensions in the region, and NATO is complaining their own exercises don't justify the Russian ones.

Russia's Defense Ministry said their exercise was "equitable" with the NATO one, with a similar amount of military hardware, and shouldn't be any more of a provocation than NATO's is.

NATO's Sabre Strike wargames, and the associated BALTOPS 2014 operation, will continue through June 21.