

# Major NATO War Games Set To Begin Miles From Russian Base



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*[Authored by Kyle Anzalone & Will Porter via The Libertarian Institute.](#)*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization will soon conduct large-scale exercises in the Baltics, with thousands of troops from more than a dozen nations set to take part in war games **just 40 miles from the nearest Russian military base.**

Dubbed "Hedgehog," the drills will **kick off later this week in Estonia and run until June 3, meant to simulate a Russian invasion.** They will involve [15,000 troops from 14 countries](#) – including the United States, Britain, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Norway, as well as **non-NATO members Ukraine, Georgia, Sweden and Finland.**



*File image: US Marine Corps*

According to Major General Veiko-Vello Palm, deputy commander of the Estonian Defence Forces, the exercise will take place just [40 miles](#) from a Russian military base, a facility hosting Moscow's 76th Guards Air Assault Division in the border city of Pskov.

The size of the war games – among the largest in the Baltics since the fall of the USSR – their proximity to the Russian border, and the inclusion of non-NATO states are likely to escalate tensions with Moscow. Though the exercises **were planned before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, they will no doubt serve as an additional show of force** as NATO members flood the Ukrainian battlefield with billions of dollars in weapons and gear.

The drills come as US lawmakers [move ahead](#) on a massive \$40 billion aid package for Kiev, around half of which will be devoted to arms shipments. That bill follows more than \$14 billion in aid already

delivered or authorized by the US government.

The Hedgehog exercise will also overlap with two major NATO and allied military drills currently being held in the region, "**Defender Europe**" and "**Swift Response**," which together involve around **18,000 soldiers from 20 countries**. A [flurry of additional war games](#) are planned for Germany, Finland, Poland and elsewhere in the coming months.

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Large-scale NATO military exercises Siil 2022 (Hedgehog 2022), start in Estonia and will last from 16 May to 3 June involving 15,000 troops from 14 countries. These are one of the largest drills in the country since 1991

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Major General Palm noted that Hedgehog would include more participants than originally planned due to the war in Ukraine, though declined to go into specifics about how many Ukrainian and Georgian troops would take part. "I would like not to go into details, but we are talking about a few people, not tens or hundreds of people," he said.

**It's unclear if Finland or Sweden were initially meant to participate in the latest drills**, but both countries recently applied for membership in the NATO bloc, citing security concerns stemming from Moscow's attack on its neighbor.

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