

## Russia begins military exercises in North Caucasus

Vladikavkaz (Russia), July 5 (RIA Novosti) Russia began Saturday large scale military exercises in several regions of the southern federal district, which includes highly volatile North Caucasus republics, a senior military official said.

'The active phase of the multi-stage exercise will be held through the second week of July,' said Maj. Gen. Vladimir Maystrenko, deputy chief of staff of the North Caucasus Military District.

He said the main goal of the exercise is to practise interoperability between federal troops, interior ministry's troops, border guards, and the Air Force in special operations against militants and the defence of Russia's state borders.

The exercise will mostly take place on the territory of Chechnya, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachayevo-Circassia.

The region has also been recently shaken by an intensified conflict between Georgia and its breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

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