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## **MINISTER DENIES SERBIA WILL HOST NATO EXERCISE**

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Defense Minister Aleksandar Vulin said on Wednesday that REGEX-2018 will not be a NATO exercise, adding that it is a regional initiative launched in 2013.

"So far this regional initiative has been implemented in Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Jordan, and next year it will be here," Vulin said, a day after Radio Free Europe reported about "the first joint NATO exercise to be held in Serbia's territory."

"It is a command-staff exercise that will be supported by certain computer simulations, and these are the kind of exercises that have been previously held in the territory of our country. The first exercise of this type was done in 2010. This is not a NATO exercise, but a regional initiative and nothing else," Vulin said, responding to reporters while visiting the town of Valjevo in Western Serbia.

Serbia is a neutral country, the Ministry of Defense cited him as saying.

"We will exercise with everyone from whom we can learn something, both with NATO and with CSTO, we will work bilaterally with the US Armed Forces, we will work bilaterally with the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and will learn from everyone we can learn something from," Vulin said.

Vulin also said that Serbia will not join NATO "as long as Aleksandar Vucic is its president and the supreme commander (of the army)" - and while he serves as the minister of defense.

"Once Aleksandar Vucic is not the supreme commander, I don't know what will happen, and when he is not the president of the Republic, maybe some other people will come who will think differently, but while he is the supreme commander we will not enter NATO, let there be no dilemmas or doubts," emphasized Vulin.

REGEX ("regional exercise")-2018 will represent continued military cooperation between several countries within this regional initiative, launched in 2013, and is being realized with expert and partial financial support of NATO's Joint Command in Naples, and adhering to NATO standards accepted by all EU member-states.

The cost of participation in the exercise is covered by each participating country for its members.

The first exercise under the regional initiative REGEX was held in Turkey in 2014, when five officers of the Serbian Armed Forces took part.

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Kaynak/Source: