
PAKISTAN-RUSSIA JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE BEGINS

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A two-week long joint counterterrorism exercise between the special forces of Pakistan and Russia began in Minralney Vody, Russia, the Pakistan army said Monday.

The opening ceremony of the DRUZBA 2017 -- which is another sign of the growing military cooperation between the two countries in recent years -- was attended by senior military officials of special forces of both countries, according to a statement from Pakistan army's media wing, Inter Services Public Relations.

The exercise, which focuses on counterterrorism operations, hostage and rescue, cordon and search operations, "will enhance and further strengthen military ties between both the countries and share Pakistan army's experience in war against terrorism", the statement said.

Moscow and Islamabad have broadened their defense and economic cooperation in recent years, which some analysts see as a new regional alignment following strained relations between Pakistan and the U.S, mainly on Afghanistan.

Russia, in August, delivered 4 Mi-35 gunship helicopters to Pakistan under a \$153 million contract signed earlier this year.

Islamabad, according to local media reports, has also shown interest in purchasing the S-400 Russian missile defense system.

In 2014, Moscow lifted a decades-long arms embargo on Islamabad, which was imposed following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

Russia also threw its weight behind Pakistan after U.S President Donald Trump, while announcing his new policy for South Asia last month, accused Islamabad of providing safe havens to Afghan Taliban.

Kaynak/Source: