

Security Belt 2025; Iran, Russia, China flex naval muscles in joint drills

International Desk

The navies of Iran, Russia and China launched new military drills off the coast of Iran on Monday in a bid to "enhance naval cooperation" between the three countries' navies.

Flotillas of Russian and Chinese military vessels arrived in Iran's territorial waters in the northern part of the Indian Ocean on Monday to participate in the large-scale Security Belt 2025 joint naval exercise.

Russian Rezkiv and Geroy Rossiyskoy Federatsii Aldar Tsydenzhapov corvettes as well as Pechenga fleet oiler of the Pacific Fleet,

alongside Chinese Baotou destroyer and Gaoyouhu replenishment ship docked at Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port on Monday.

Representatives of several other countries, like Azerbaijan, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates, also landed at Iran's only oceanic port city to take part in the military drills as observers.

Rear Admiral Mostafa Tajeddini, the spokesman for the joint naval drills, said on Monday that the main stage of the Security Belt 2025 naval military drills will kick off on Tuesday.

He said that the exercise

aims to enhance maritime security in the northern Indian Ocean and increase maritime interactions between the three countries in order to increase cooperation.

Vessels from the Iranian Navy and the Naval Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps will take part in the drills that mark the seventh edition of "Security Belt" exercises by Iran, Russia and China.

The US President Donald Trump also reacted to the military drills.

On Monday, while returning to Washington from Florida on Air Force One, Trump was asked by a reporter if he was concerned

about the joint military exercises between Iran, Russia and China. "No. Not at all. Because we are stronger than all of them," he said.

"I have rebuilt the United States. Unfortunately, Biden (former US president) did nothing about it, but I rebuilt the military."

The three countries have held similar exercises in the region in recent years. They have also been involved in joint efforts aimed at countering piracy and maritime terrorism, exchanging information in naval rescue and relief operations as well as sharing operational and tactical experience.



Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy guided-missile destroyer Baotou (133) is seen during joint military drills between Iran, Russia, and China in the Gulf of Oman on March 10, 2025.
● IRANIAN ARMY OFFICE

Iran: 'No justification' for attacks on minorities in Syria

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Monday condemned recent mass killings of civilians in Syria, saying that there was "no justification" for attacks on minorities.

"There is no justification for the attacks on parts of the Alawite, Christian, Druze and other minorities, which have truly hurt the emotions and conscience of both the countries of the region and the international community," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei during a weekly press conference. "In recent days, unfortunate incidents have taken place in certain areas of Syria. We are deeply concerned about reports of insecurity and violence," Baqaei said.

"We strongly condemn such actions, and any mass killing or action against civilians is unacceptable and unjustifiable," he added.

The remarks came after heavy crackdown by the country's new rulers' security forces on the Alawite minority.

Fighting erupted on Thursday between Syr-

ia's new security forces and loyalists of the former government of toppled president Bashar al-Assad.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Monday that 973 civilians have been killed in the violence in the coastal heartland of the country's Alawite minority.

The fighting has also killed hundreds of members of the security forces and pro-Assad fighters, according to the Observatory, which has reported the overall death toll at more than 1,300.

Clashes broke out in the country's northwestern coastal region, which is predominantly inhabited by the Alawite minority sect.

"The fact that certain Alawite communities have been targeted has wounded consciences [around the world]," Baqaei stressed.

He called the unwelcome development "a real test" for the new Syrian rulers to fulfill their responsibilities "in safeguarding the lives of Syrians."

Baqaei said that such incidents only complicate Syria's political situation further.

Pezeshkian: Iran regards conflicts as detrimental to region, world

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tehran considers tension and conflicts in the region detrimental to itself, the region and the entire world, stressing that the Islamic Republic seeks unity in the region.

The Iranian president made the remarks in a phone conversation with Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stør, during which both sides discussed bilateral and multilateral issues.

Pezeshkian said Iran has never sought to produce nuclear weapons and affirmed the country's principled policy on defusing tensions and fostering unity in the region.

"However, we will definitely counter any threat against our country's security and interests with strength and power," he added.

He noted that Iran has always had and will have cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on verification of the country's nuclear activities.

In an interview with Fox News recorded on March 6, US President Donald Trump claimed that he had sent a letter to Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Trump said he had warned Iran to open talks on a nuclear deal or be handled militarily.

In response to Trump, Ayatollah



Khamenei said on Saturday that the insistence of some bullying powers on holding talks with Iran does not aim to solve issues, emphasizing that Iran would never accept the expectations of bullying states. Elsewhere in the phone call, Pezeshkian pointed to good relations between Tehran and Oslo and common grounds for bilateral cooperation on regional and international fields and hailed Norway's efforts to establish peace in the region.

Referring to the ongoing sensitive situation in the region and the world, he said Iran has always made efforts to maintain regional peace, stability and security and prevented the occurrence of any war and conflict.

"Unfortunately, the Zionist regime, as the main factor of tension and crisis in the region, is inciting war and committing crime and genocide against the oppressed people of Palestine," Pezeshkian emphasized.

He added that the Israeli regime "is attempting to portray the peaceful nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a factor of insecurity through fabrication of lies."

Araghchi reaffirms Tehran will never negotiate under pressure, intimidation

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated Tehran's position over talks on its nuclear program, saying that the Islamic Republic will not negotiate under pressure and intimidation.

Iran's top diplomat in a post on his X account on Monday said, "We will NOT negotiate under pressure and intimidation. We will NOT even consider it, no matter what the subject may be." "Negotiation is different from bullying and issuing diktats," he added.

He reaffirmed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear energy program, emphasizing that there is fundamentally no such thing as its "potential militarization."

Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations said on Sunday if the objective of negotiations with Iran is to address concerns about any potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program; such discussions may be subject to consideration.

"However, should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program to claim that what Obama (former US president) failed to achieve has now been accomplished, such negotiations will never take place," the mission said in a post on its X account.

In recent months, the US Presi-

dent Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed his interest to reach an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program.

However, his language of threats and imposition of sanctions against Iran have made Iranian officials skeptical of negotiations with the US administration.

Trump last month restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran which includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero.

Iranian officials have frequently said that negotiations under pressure are not meaningful.

In his post, Araghchi said consultations between Iran and the European troika – France, Germany and Britain – and separately with Russia and China are underway "on equal footing and mutual respect."

"The aim is to explore ways to build more confidence and more transparency on our nuclear energy program in return for the lifting of unlawful sanctions," the top Iranian diplomat explained. He noted that the US enjoyed Iran's respect in the past whenever it was respectful in its discourse, but it was confronted whenever it adopted a threatening posture.

"Every action compels a reaction," Araghchi stated.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that Iran and the three European countries will hold new talks in the coming days.

Syria, Iran, and ...

Israel's Strategy: Having occupied the Golan Heights for decades, Israel

has consistently pursued a policy aimed at keeping Syria on edge. Airstrikes targeting Syrian military installations have become a regular occurrence, often justified as preemptive measures against potential threats. Moreover, Israeli forces have inched closer to Damascus, advancing within 20 kilometers of the capital. From Israel's standpoint, a fractured and unstable Syria plays right into its hands.

Turkey's Ambitions: For years, Turkey has sought to bring Syria into its sphere of influence, a goal that continues to dictate its policies. While Ankara remains fixated on securing its southern border, Erdogan's over-

arching objective is to outmaneuver Iran in the region. Now, both Turkey and Israel find themselves reaping the benefits of Syria's instability. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for his part, has thrown his weight behind Russian military presence in Syria, viewing it as preferable to Turkish encroachment. This was underscored by Israel's foreign minister's recent visit to Moscow, during which he lobbied for Russia's continued presence in Tartus.

The Arab world is keen on welcoming Syria back into the fold, but given the lack of unified Arab leadership, the pressure to reintegrate the country remains lukewarm at best. What ultimately matters for Syria's future—and the wider

region—is how Iran and Turkey navigate their differences. Both nations are regarded as adversaries by Netanyahu, yet their ability to strike a pragmatic accord could be a game-changer. For Iran, Syria's role in the Resistance Axis is non-negotiable, while Turkey's primary concern is bolstering its economic and political clout. Meanwhile, Israel's endgame remains unchanged: a weakened Syria that can be easily kept in check.

In this intricate geopolitical chess game, a well-calculated agreement between Iran and Turkey could turn Syria into a formidable bulwark against Israeli expansionism. Achieving such an outcome would require direct, high-stakes negotiations—without outside interference.



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