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Russia Orders an Increase in Size of its Army to Over 2 Million

Russian President Vladimir Putin has [ordered](#) the expansion of the Russian military personnel from 1.9 million to nearly 2.04 million. The Russian military will be operating at this new level from the beginning of next year. The last increase in the size of the military took place in 2017.

Russia Deploys Hypersonic Missiles to Kaliningrad

Russia has [relocated](#) three warplanes equipped with hypersonic missiles to its exclave of Kaliningrad. The Russian Defence Ministry said that they will be on "round-the-clock combat duty." Wedged between EU and NATO members Lithuania and Poland that have firmly backed Ukraine in the conflict with Moscow, Kaliningrad does not share a land border with Russia.

Russia Stages Vostok Military Exercises

Russia has [launched](#) large-scale joint military exercises in the Far East starting 1 September 2022. A total of 50,000 troops will take part in the Vostok-2022 war games compared to over 300,000 who participated in the same drills four years ago. Alongside China, Russia and India, there are 11 other countries taking part including Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Algeria, Syria and a number of former Soviet states.

Indonesia Says President Putin will Attend G20 Summit

Indonesian President [Joko Widodo](#) has said that President Putin is likely to attend the G20 summit scheduled to be held in Bali in November. If confirmed, it would be one of President Putin's first face-to-face meetings with Western leaders since the war in Ukraine broke out six months ago.

Russia Launches Iranian Satellite

Russia has [launched](#) an Iranian satellite from the Baikonur Cosmodrome amidst controversy that Moscow might use it to boost its surveillance of military targets in Ukraine. Iran has, however, stressed that Tehran will control the satellite "from day one" and "no third country will be able to access the information" sent by the satellite. It also said that the purpose of the Khayyam satellite is to "monitor the country's borders," enhance agricultural productivity and monitor water resources and natural disasters. Notably, space cooperation between Russia and Iran dates back to 2005 when Russia launched Iran's Sina-1 satellite from its Plesetsk Cosmodrome.

Gazprom Shares Soar 30 per cent on Record Profit & Dividend Promise

[Gazprom's shares](#) appreciated by 30 per cent on 31 August after its board recommended paying dividends on record net profits in the first half of this year. It had earlier stated that it made 2.5 trillion roubles (US\$ 41.36 billion) in net profit in the first six months of this year "despite sanctions pressure and an unfavourable external environment." Meanwhile, Gazprom [cut off](#) its gas supplies via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline for maintenance work which has to be carried out after "every 1,000 hours of operation."

Uzbekistan-Tajikistan Military Drills

The Uzbek-Tajik joint [military drills](#) kicked off in Termez on 5 August 2022. Techniques and methods of close combat, evacuation of the wounded and repelling the attack of a mock enemy were worked out. These drills were part of the increased military cooperation between the two nations amidst their shared concerns over the situation in Afghanistan.

U.S. Sponsors Military Drills in Tajikistan

On 10 August 2022, a U.S. central command-sponsored [military exercise](#) kicked off in Tajikistan. Named ‘Regional Cooperation 22 military exercise’, the drills involved countries like the United States, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan. This six-day command-post exercise sought to “coordinate, synchronize, and react to events in a non-threatening environment”.

India’s Defence Minister Visits Uzbekistan

On 23 August 2022, India’s [Defence Minister](#) Shri Rajnath Singh reached Tashkent for a two-day visit to attend the annual defence ministerial meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Member States. During his visit, he also held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The Indian Defence Minister also stressed that Afghanistan must not be used to provide sanctuary to any terror groups.

India’s Renewable Energy Partnership with Central Asia

On 24 August 2022, India’s Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Bandaru Wilsonbabu [welcomed](#) the Central Asian countries in the International Solar Alliance and the One Sun, One World, One Grid Initiative. H.E. Dilshod Akhatov, the ambassador of Uzbekistan to India, stressed on how India could assist in the production of solar modules, batteries for energy storage, and other renewable energy systems in Uzbekistan.

European Countries Take Part in Pitch Black 2022

In a reiteration of their commitment towards the Indo-Pacific, UK, France and, for the first time, Germany participated in

‘Pitch Black 2022’ exercises. This is the Royal Australian Air Force’s biennial multinational exercise which this year took place from 19 August to 9 September. Germany sent one of its largest deployments in peacetime with [13 aircrafts](#). Meanwhile, [France](#) sought to demonstrate its capacity for long-distance air power projection.

French President Visits Algeria

On 27 August, French President Emmanuel Macron and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune declared a "[new, irreversible dynamic of progress](#)" between their nations. Ties between the two countries have faced turbulence over the years including on account of Macron questioning Algeria's existence as a nation before the French occupation. Macron’s visit came shortly after [Algeria](#) marked six decades of independence following 132 years of [French](#) rule and a long eight-year war. It also came as European powers scramble to replace Russian energy imports.

EU Restricts Visa to Russians

European Union foreign ministers have agreed to suspend a [visa agreement](#) with Moscow, making it harder for Russian citizens to obtain entry to the bloc. EU will freeze a 2007 agreement to ease travel between Russia and Europe. Ukraine and some member states had earlier called for a blanket ban which did not happen for lack of consensus among the EU members. The five EU countries bordering Russia said in a joint statement that they could introduce temporary bans or restrictions "in order to address imminent public security issues". France and Germany, however, [warned](#) in a joint statement that "far-reaching restrictions" could feed Russia's narrative of being a victim and alienate future generation of Russians.