

U.S. announces largest European war games since Cold War



Washington, October 10 (RHC)-- The United States military has announced plans to hold what is said to be the largest U.S.-led drills in Europe early next year. The U.S. European Command (EUROCOM) says that 37,000 forces, some 20,000 American troops, will partake in Defender Europe-20 maneuvers, which is set to be held in April and May 2020.

According to the statement, the U.S. army will deploy a division headquarters, three tank brigades and thousands of other troops to the major event, which will be held across 10 European countries – mainly Germany and Poland.

Besides U.S. Army forces, the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps will also participate in the maneuvers along with troops from 18 other countries, EUCOM said, adding that the drills and all the linked activities will cost around \$340 million.

“Readiness is not only about having the right forces and capabilities in place throughout the theater, it’s about exercising our ability to quickly receive and integrate forces with our own and those of our allies and partners,” Lt. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, US Army Europe commanding general, said in a statement. “This ability is critical in projecting force at a moment’s notice.”

EUROCOM said the drills will resemble the Return of Forces to Germany, or more commonly Reforger, drills of the Cold War era, which at its peak involved some 125,000 NATO forces in 1988. Back then, Washington focused on rapid deployment of troops to Europe in massive numbers as a key part of its preparations for potential conflict with the Soviet Union.

The need for such exercises faded away as the risk of large-scale conflict in Europe diminished after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The last Reforger was held in 1993.

The U.S. Army is planning to relearn Cold War-era skills to confront potential threats from Russia in Eastern Europe, according to a report. Despite having deployed large number of troops to the Middle East, the United States has over the past years shifted its focus to defending Europe against “Russian aggression.”

“A lot of those skills that the units are going to practice, loading up to go to another theater, have atrophied,” said Major General Jeffrey Kramer, who is in charge of EUCOM exercise programs. With Defender, “You’ll have the better part of a heavy division move all their equipment and all their people, which is tremendous at the tactical level.” “At a strategic level, we are showing resolve to any adversaries,” Kramer said.

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