

22 nations gear up for RIMPAC exercises in isles

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Twenty-two nations, 42 ships, six submarines, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel will participate in the biennial Rim of the Pacific exercise scheduled for June 29 to Aug. 3 in and around Hawaii, the Navy said Tuesday.

The world's biggest international maritime military exercise will be larger than two years ago, reflecting reduced wartime commitments and the growing emphasis on the Pacific.

RIMPAC "provides a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans," the Navy said in a news release. The series began in

This year's exercise includes units or personnel from Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, South Korea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz will be the centerpiece of U.S. Navy forces. Surface ships will "battle" three submarines from Pearl Harbor and subs from Australia, Canada and South Korea.

Russia is scheduled to take part with a destroyer, tanker and salvage tug.

Participants will conduct exercises in a range of scenarios from disaster relief and maritime security operations to sea control and complex war fighting, the Navy said.

Training includes amphibious operations, gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air defense exercises, as well as counterpiracy, mine clearance operations, explosive ordnance disposal and diving and salvage operations.

War games also will have tests of a submarine-launched unmanned aerial vehicle and blue-laser underwater communications, and a "green" emphasis with the largest government purchase of biofuel in history.

Hoteliers are expecting an influx of business, with past RIMPAC exercises adding more than \$40 million in contracts and spending on shore, the Navy said.

Aston Hotels and Resorts, Castle Resorts and Hotels, and Aqua Hotels and Resorts are among hoteliers here offering special rates for the exercise.

Thirty-two ships, five submarines, more than 170 aircraft and about 20,000 personnel took part in RIMPAC two years ago.

