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# US, Russian soldiers train together in Colorado

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DENVER – The Russians are coming — in fact, they're already here — but it may not be what you think.

Twenty-two Russian army paratroopers are in Colorado for two weeks of training with the 10th Special Forces Group at Fort Carson, a post outside Colorado Springs.

The two nations' militaries have been conducting joint exercises for years, but this is believed to be the first time Russian soldiers have trained on U.S. soil, Lt. Col. Steven Osterholzer said.

The Russians and Americans are training together on basic soldier skills ranging from firing weapons to making parachute drops, said Osterholzer, a public affairs officer for the 10th Special Forces Group.

It's the first step toward joint exercises in more complicated anti-terrorism operations such as helicopter drops, he said.

"This is the shake-hands, get-to-know-you kind of thing," Osterholzer said. "What this is not is a massive counterterrorism exercise."

Some people have seen sinister motives behind the appearance of troops from America's longtime Cold War enemy at a U.S. Army post, he said.

"Conspiracy theorists are alive and well," he said. Some people who've called Osterholzer have said President Barack Obama is a communist, or that the Russians plan to kidnap Americans and take them back to Russia, or that the training is a step toward universal world government.

"It's been an interesting two weeks at the public affairs office," he said.

The training is the result of a U.S.-Russian agreement signed a year ago. The objectives are to create a basic relationship between the two

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nations' militaries and to build an understanding about how each other's military works, including communications, Osterholzer said.

That knowledge is vital in joint military and humanitarian operations such as anti-terrorism measures and disaster relief, he said.

At Fort Carson, the training involves only unclassified weapons, and the Russians have U.S. escorts around the clock to make sure "they stay where they're supposed to be," Osterholzer said.

"These soldiers are not running around amok on their own," he said.

The Russians are staying in a military hotel on Fort Carson but otherwise spend their on-duty and off-duty time with their American counterparts. They'll also take in a baseball game, watching the Colorado Springs Sky Sox, a minor-league affiliate of the Colorado Rockies.

"The visit has gone amazingly well and smooth," Osterholzer said. "They're excited to be here. They're motivated, they're professional. And our soldiers are the same."

The Russian contingent includes a colonel but most are enlisted soldiers. They arrived Sunday by commercial aircraft and will leave June 1, again flying commercially.

Next year, an equal number of U.S. soldiers from 10th Special Forces Group are expected to go to Russia for similar exercises, Osterholzer said.

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