

Farmers and environmentalists in Montenegro protect mountain from military's plans

Montenegrin army's plan to host military drills including mortar shelling in the mountain region of Sinjajevina didn't sit well with local farmers and environmental activists, who set up camps in the area and staged non-stop protests to oppose the drills. Montenegro's Defense Ministry has postponed military training exercises.

The exercise was scheduled for this week, but the army had to retreat. Colonel Aleksandar Pantovic, the Chief of Staff of the General Staff, announced that the drills have to be delayed. "We conducted a reconnaissance... the conditions for shooting were not met and that this is not possible," Pantovic told local media. "When all the conditions are met, we will continue with the realization of the exercise."

A local MP from the URA party supporting the protest, Dritan Abazovic, called the decision a "significant victory" for Montenegro's citizens and ecology.

The region in question, Mount Sinjajevina, consists of the largest stretch of grassland in the Balkans and makes up part of a location designated a UNESCO biosphere reserve. It was chosen as a place for a military polygon last year - something that triggered public discontent. Farmers and activists argued that explosives risk damaging the delicate environment and would contaminate the water supply.

"We will certainly not clash with the citizens," the country's Defense Minister Predrag Boskovic said in an interview. However, he noted that it is impossible to have an army unable to train on its own territory.

Source: rt.com