



Small Boat Cruisin' for a Bruisin'

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has a long history of constituting river flotillas to help defend their large inland waterways. Naturally, the riverboats have a shallower draft and smaller engines than sea-going vessels. As the accompanying excerpted articles report, Russia is now building *Kalibr* cruise missile corvettes that can operate from inland lakes and rivers as well as calm seas. This gives them an edge on the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty since they are not land based. Some *Kalibr* cruise missiles and launchers are incorporated into standard Conex containers, making them difficult to identify. The 3M-14 *Kalibr* (NATO SS-N-27 Sizzler) comes in anti-shipping, anti-land, anti-submarine variants and can be air delivered, submarine launched, ship-launched, rail-launched or surface-launched. The same shipyard is building the larger *Karakurts*, sea-going cruise missile corvette for the Pacific and Northern Fleets, which can expect rough seas. The Russian Navy needs to refit or replace many of its vessels and the small missile corvettes may provide the necessary coverage during this process. **End**

OE Watch Commentary (Grau)

Source: Denis Komarovskiy, “Ракетный катер стратегического назначения (The Strategic Missile Boat),” *Izvestia*, 16 July 2018.
<https://iz.ru/766965/denis-komarovskii/raketnyi-kater-strategicheskogo-naznachenia>

The Buyan-M ships have incorporated the design solutions of the Project 21630 “Buyan” Small Gunboat but, in so doing, they are substantially larger: 949 ton displacement versus 500. Three of those gunboats, which were transferred to the Navy between 2006 and 2012, are serving on the Caspian.

The Project 21631 has obtained a strong strike weapon: the...universal ship eight-missile launcher, which permits the employment of the “Kalibr-NK”...long-range cruise missile. These ...boats are shallow draft, essentially, these are “river-sea” class ships. Shipbuilders are building them in the middle of Continental Russia, in Tatarstan, and the ships arrive at their future duty location along the internal water routes...

The shortcomings are immediately obvious – poor seaworthiness. The missile “Buyans” ride roughly on the waves. Furthermore, the ship ... air defenses are minimal which means they must work within a larger air defense umbrella....The problems with seaworthiness and weapons have been resolved rather shrewdly: Russia has developed a “seaworthy” ship, with ...increased draft. This is the Project 22800 “Karakurt” Small Missile Ship, which is in series production and is also equipped with cruise missile launchers.

The Buyans’ ... precision-guided long-range cruise missiles are capable of destroying targets at a range of up to 2,600 kilometers...In the non-nuclear configuration, the Kalibr should have a range within 1,500-1,700 kilometers, which was demonstrated on 7 October 2015, when a group of Caspian Flotilla ships (the Missile Ship Dagestan and three “Buyans”: Grad Sviyazhsk, Uglich, and Velikiy Ustyug) conducted a strike using 26 cruise missiles against targets in Syria. At that time, the missiles flew more than 1,500 kilometers over the south Caspian, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Shallow draft...permits the “Buyans” to freely travel along the internal water routes. This means that a ship with cruise missiles can be redeployed from the north to the south along the rivers of European Russia. And more than this – they can fight on these rivers: the range of the main weapon permits this.

One can actually talk about the creation of mobile strategic deterrence weapons (both nuclear and nonnuclear), which are capable of conducting precision-guided strikes in Europe, in the Middle East, and in Central Asia. Observers point out that Russia thus avoids one of the restrictions of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987). In it, the USSR and the US were banned from developing and deploying ground based launchers for cruise missiles with a range of from 500 to 5,500 kilometers.

However, sea-launched cruise missiles have been withdrawn from the arms control treaties, which suited Washington’s position: its Navy had those missiles at its disposal as the trump card and didn’t want to limit them. Therefore, the situation has emerged where Russia can maneuver “using strategic missile boats” of the “river-sea” class, while utilizing internal water routes without restriction.

At this time, the “Buyans” are part of the composition of three Navy combined formations: the Black Sea Fleet, the Caspian Flotilla, and the Baltic Fleet...Right now the Navy has six “Buyans” and just as many more will become operational in 2019-2023. It is unclear ... if the series will be continued after that. The Navy’s plans expanded construction of the seaworthy “Karakurts” for the Northern and Pacific fleets. The Zelenodolsk shipyard is included in this effort.

When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>

(continued)



Continued: Small Boat Cruisin' for a Bruisin'

Source: Artem Vladimirovich Voznesenskiy, “«Каракурт»: пистолет у виска империализма 2.0 (“Karakurt”: The Pistol to the Temple of Imperialism 2.0),” Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye, 27 July 2018. http://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2018-07-27/10_1006_ship.html

On 5 May 2018, the third Project 22800 “Karakurt” MRK [Small Missile Ship] “Shkval” launched at Pella Leningrad Shipbuilding Plant in Otradnoye (Leningrad Oblast)...The specialists of St. Petersburg’s “Almaz” Central Marine Design Bureau designed the “Karakurt” and its construction is being conducted at a number of shipyards. At present, two ships of this class – the Tayfun and the Shkval are being finished afloat...

The ship’s hull – is steel and the superstructure is made from an aluminum-magnesium alloy. Structures made of an aluminum-magnesium alloy, besides low specific gravity and high corrosion resistance, are infamous in the Navy for their combustibility. The intense combustion of light alloy superstructures was one of the factors in the loss of the large Antisubmarine Warfare Ship Otvazhnyy (1974), the Destroyer Sheffield and the Frigate Ardent (1982) and the Project 123 MRK Musson (1987)...

There are no portholes on the ship, which increases the structural strength of the hull and superstructure and the tightness and reduces the radar and optical signature, and increases the crew’s level of protection under conditions of enemy employment of weapons of mass destruction. In general, the architecture of the above-water portion of the hull and superstructure attests to the serious work on the reduction of the ship’s radar cross section. The ship is not designed for sailing in ice but they are sending the “Shkval”...to the north...

Considering the ship’s seaworthiness...if the ship continues underway and the hull maintains its tightness, most likely nothing bad will happen to it in the strongest storms. But the hull design and the ratio of the hull’s length to the width are characteristic of fast ships which impacts negatively on lateral stability...The ship is underpowered for northern waters...

Realistically, the Karakurt can be deployed on the water of the White Sea seasonally – from May-July through October-November, when the sea is free of ice. The White Sea is an internal sea, which reduces the danger of enemy submarines due to the...antisubmarine barrier at the sea’s mouth. The sea’s coastline is rugged but the western portion has islands which will aid in the ship’s security...The ship can employ Kalibr missiles, around the clock and regardless of the weather conditions, while...remaining under the coastal air defense umbrella...

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Project 22800 “Karakurt.”

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