



Russia Increasing Military Capabilities in the Far East

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation has recently announced several force structure changes to increase military capabilities on her Eastern border, for the purposes of coastal defense and area denial. (Russia has already announced the creation of a Coastal Defense Division in Chukotka.) Specifically, the Russian Federation appears to be interested in hindering the freedom of movement of the US Navy in the Northern Pacific. The first accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses Russian plans to field a new aviation regiment and Air and Air Defense Army in the Russian Far East. The passage quotes military expert Aleksey Leonkov as saying that the US's military activity in the region "has increased many-fold under the pretext of the North Korean missile threat." According to the second passage, also from *Izvestia*, Russia will deploy new coastal defense missile systems (Bal [SSC-6 SENNIGHT] and Bastion [SSC-5 STOOGUE]) in order to deny "access to the Sea of Okhotsk and to the coasts of Primorye to American aircraft carriers." **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“This region has recently become ‘hot’. The US’s military activity here has increased many-fold under the pretext of the North Korean missile threat...We directly border Alaska in the Chukotka and Kamchatka Region, where major US aviation and naval bases have been built. The United States has six aircraft carriers in the Pacific Ocean...” - Military Expert Aleksey Leonkov

Source: Sergey Valchenko, Aleksey Ramm, and Yevgeniy Andreyev, “Дальний Восток прикроют морским воздушным щитом: На Тихоокеанском флоте создается новая армия ВВС и ПВО (They Will Cover the Far East with a Naval Air Shield: A New Air and Air Defense Army Is Being Created in the Pacific Fleet),” *Izvestia Online*, 18 December 2017. <https://iz.ru/679966/sergei-valchenko-aleksei-ramm-evgenii-andreev/dalnii-vostok-prikroiut-morskim-vozdushnym-shchitom>

In 2018, they will merge the Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation and air defense forces into the composition of a powerful army with headquartered on Kamchatka. The new operational combined formation will consist of at least two divisions – aviation and air defense forces. It has been tasked to monitor the air situation on Kamchatka and Chukotka and in the Arctic Region. Based upon expert assessments, the formation of an Air and Air Defense forces Army neighboring Alaska attests to the buildup of the Pacific Fleet’s strike potential.

*Ministry of Defense personnel reported to *Izvestia* that the formation of the Air and Air Defense Army will begin in 2018. Aviation units and the air defense missile and radiotechnical troops will be transferred to its composition. The future operational combined formation’s area of responsibility extends from the Northern Kuriles to the Arctic Wrangel Island...Unmanned aerial vehicle subunits will become part of the composition of the composite aviation regiments, along with squadrons of antisubmarine warfare and transport aircraft, fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, and missile-equipped aircraft.*

The 317th Composite Aviation Regiment, which is deployed at Yelizovo near Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, and the 53rd Air Defense Division that is also based there will constitute the foundation of the new army’s grouping... The aviation and air defense forces that have been assembled under one-man command will be able to effectively track threats in their area of responsibility and effectively counter them. The grouping’s mission – is to exclude a surprise air attack and to instantaneously disrupt any attempts to challenge the Russian borders. The Air and Air Defense Army will operate in a single command and control loop with the main forces of the Pacific Fleet and of all Eastern Military District.

*Military Expert Aleksey Leonkov told *Izvestia* that the creation of these formations on the Pacific Axis is not a moment too soon. “This region has recently become ‘hot’. The US’s military activity here has increased many-fold under the pretext of the North Korean missile threat,” Aleksey Leonkov explained. “We directly border Alaska in the Chukotka and Kamchatka Region, where major US aviation and naval bases have been built. The United States has six aircraft carriers in the Pacific Ocean...”*

Source: Nikolay Surkov and Aleksey Ramm, “«Бастион» на Курилах: Новые базы на островах прикроют мощной системой береговой обороны (The ‘Bastion’ in the Kuriles: They Will Cover the New Bases on the Islands with a Powerful Coastal Defense System),” *Izvestia Online*, 29 November 2017. <https://iz.ru/676106/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/bastion-na-kurilakh> <https://iz.ru/news/666216>

Russia will build bases on the strategically important islands of the Kuriles Archipelago. They will cover Paramushir and Matua from attacks from the sea with a powerful missile shield. Bal [SSC-6 SENNIGHT] and Bastion [SSC-5 STOOGUE] coastal anti-ship missile batteries will be able to sweep with fire the water area along nearly the entire Kuriles Archipelago – from Kamchatka to Iturup. The work on equipping the firing positions will begin already in 2018. According to the experts’ assessments, the new coastal defense system will permit them to reliably “secure” the Sea of Okhotsk and cover Primorye and Sakhalin from the attacks of a hostile navy...

The Bastion mobile coastal complexes are armed with Onyx supersonic anti-ship complexes, which are capable of destroying targets at ranges of up to 600 kilometers (with the availability of a helicopter with a radar complex). The Bastion batteries, which are deployed on the island of Matua in the middle of the Kuriles Archipelago, are capable of sweeping with fire the entire archipelago – from Kamchatka in the north to Iturup in the south. This will permit them to reliably “secure” the Sea of Okhotsk and to cover Sakhalin Island and Primorye from possible attacks...The men and equipment that are deployed here will control the northern portion of the Kuriles Archipelago and will also provide additional cover of Petropavlovsk, where ballistic missile submarines are based...The Bal complexes (firing range up to 120 kilometers) will provide the defense of the navy bases themselves in the event that the enemy will turn out to be closer or will attempt to land an amphibious assault force on Matua or Paramushir.

*Naval Expert Aleksandr Mozgovoy told *Izvestia* that the bases in the Kuriles will permit the guarantee of security of the straits between the islands and to reliably close access to the Sea of Okhotsk and to the coasts of Primorye to American aircraft carriers...*