



Northern Fleet Expands Intelligence Support Vessels

OE Watch Commentary: According to the *Barents Sea Independent Observer* and *Svobodnaya Pressa*, the Northern Fleet has yet another ice class scientific research ship to explore, map the Arctic seabed and conduct intelligence information. The ship was named after Physicist Anatoli Aleksandrov, who became famous after devising a method for demagnetizing Soviet ships during World War II. He also worked on the design of the Soviet atomic bomb and later on the RBMK nuclear reactor that exploded in Chernobyl in 1986. The vessel was built as part of the Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research [GUGI], which conducts underwater research and intelligence gathering. GUGI has six nuclear-powered mini-submarines and a host of support vessels. (Also see: “For Those in Peril Under the Sea,” *OE Watch*, August 2019 and “Cruising in a Stretch-Submarine,” *OE Watch*, June 2019.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

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Source: Atle Staalesen, “Navy gets new vessel for secret underwater operations in Arctic,” *The Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 14 April 2020. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2020/04/navy-gets-new-vessel-secret-russian-underwater-operations-arctic>

Navy gets new vessel for secret underwater operations in Arctic

More than a year after schedule, the Zvezdochka yard in Severodvinsk, northern Russia, has officially handed over the “Akademik Aleksandrov” to the Northern Fleet. The ship is the 3rd in the Navy’s new series of special-purpose ships made for transportation of big-dimension military and special equipment, as well as search and rescue operations. It was put on the water in Severodvinsk in May 2017 and has since undergone final construction works and testing. Its sister ship “Zvezdochka” is already serving in the Northern Fleet, while the Pacific Fleet operates the “Akademik Kovalyov”. A fourth ship of the kind is currently under construction at the yard in Severodvinsk.

The “Akademik Aleksandrov” will be involved in some of the most top secret operations of the Russian Navy.... [The] vessel was built on order from the Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research [GUGI], the top secret unit directly subordinated the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces. Russia has expanded its fleet of special purpose vessels recently. Several of them are built for seabed operations possibly including sabotage operations against underwater cables. The “Akademik Aleksandrov” and its sister vessels are believed of carrying small-scale submarines for special operations and testing new weapons, including the Poseidon underwater nuclear drone.

Source: Vladimir Tuchkov, “Secret Intelligence Collector Akademik Alexandrov will approach Trump in the area of Alaska: the Defense Ministry’s Main Directorate for Deep Water Research is Solving two Global Missions,” *Svobodnaya Pressa*, 14 April 2020. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/262548/>

Secret Intelligence Collector Akademik Alexandrov will approach Trump in the area of Alaska

Akademik Alexandrov is a secret ship. And, although several of its technical specifications are not secret, one can only guess as to the composition, purpose and capabilities of the special equipment....The ship has a displacement of 5,800 tons. A length of 96 m, a beam of 18 meters, and a draft of 9.3 meters. It develops a speed of 14 knots. The crew is 65 men. It is equipped with two electric motors with a power of 3,262 hp each. It has a helicopter pad to take helicopters on board, but does not possess its own helicopter....There are three electro-hydraulic cranes... The S2500 – possesses a record cargo capacity among domestic ship-based cranes, lifting 100 tons to a boom reach of up to 25 meters. The SI20 has a telescoping boom, the maximum extension of which is 20 meters. This crane is equipped with a device to compensate for dynamic loads and a pitch compensation system, and positions cargo underwater to a depth of 500 meters. The SI5 is a crane manipulator with a cargo capacity of up to 2 tons....

The ship is intended to carry out scientific and research operations on the Arctic shelf and Antarctic seas, supporting the operation of special equipment, monitoring areas of fleet activity, areas of the conduct of tests, position location of potentially dangerous bottom objects, the installation of bottom monitoring/measurement and other equipment. It can also support search and rescue operations, towing, the installation of military and special equipment, and the tracking and lifting of sunken naval equipment.

However the main mission for which the Akademik Alexandrov was built...are intelligence collection and sabotage operations...It is equipped for deep-water submersion of diving teams. It must have television guidance equipment, which can operate at depths down to 6,000 meters... Deepwater intelligence collection is carried out against underwater cable lines of the US and the NATO countries, over which secret information is transmitted and circulates in naval networks of the North Atlantic alliance. It is read with the aid of special devices, attached to the cable, and transmitted to the carrier-ship of the intelligence collection equipment. By this method it is also possible to introduce jamming into the cable line with the goal of temporarily disrupting the operation of information trunk lines....

Oceanographic research ships can gather important data extremely effectively, placing hydrophones, which capture acoustic waves, disseminated in the water environment on the bottom, near NATO bases. In this way it can track the situation in a ... broad region, identify the movement of submarines, capture the acoustic signatures of new submarines and surface ships, recognize the specifics of operation of this or that equipment of submarine and surface ship bases.

The ships could also collect surface – broadcast – radio-technical intelligence. And in this sense, working directly in two environments, is more effective than intelligence collection aircraft....

The ship could work in the construction of a network of autonomous robotic bottom base stations (ADS), which will spread hydro-acoustic antennas, able to operate both in a passive as well as in an active mode on the bottom. The ADS would process sonar data received and retransmit it to a command post via a satellite channel. The ADS network is able to monitor the surface and underwater situation over an area of hundreds of cubic kilometers.

The ship could also receive relief maps of the sea bottom in sectors explored by the Poseidon underwater nuclear unmanned vehicle. Without such maps the covertness of a strategic unmanned vehicle will be low, since it will have to use active acoustic location for orientation.