



Updated Ka-29 Helicopters to Make Arctic Debut

OE Watch Commentary: Kamov has pioneered the development of shipboard helicopters. The Ka-27 (NATO “Helix”) began production in 1981 and continues to the present. It has an export military and civilian version (Ka-28 and Ka-32) with customers in 15 countries. It produced the Ka-29 for service on amphibious landing craft, but these were mothballed when Russia quit building the “Rhinoceros” amphibious warfare ship in order to buy French Mistral helicopter carriers in 2009. After the Crimean crisis of 2014, France refused to provide its four contracted Mistral carriers. As the accompanying passage from *Izvestia* discusses, Ka-29s are now being updated and squadrons of the updated helicopters will operate above the Arctic Circle. Pacific Fleet pilots from Kamchatka will be the first to get hands-on experience with them; while Northern Fleet crews will also start flying there in 2021. The return of the Ka-29 assault transport helicopters may indicate that Russia will start producing amphibious landing ships again.

As the passage discusses, the Russian Armed Forces are currently carrying out “a wide-ranging modernization of their helicopters.” The passage notes that a test of the brand-new Mi-28NM attack helicopter ended in Syria last year and soon, a program to upgrade the Mi-35M will start. This will entail new armor, engines, and long-range optics to enable it to find and destroy targets several kilometers away. In addition, devices are apparently being developed for the upgraded Ka-52M, to enable it to talk directly to unmanned aerial vehicles. The passage points out that the pilots will be able to watch in real time images transmitted by drones, and subsequently control the drones in flight. The new technology will allow the crew to “find targets behind enemy lines and deliver surprise strikes.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

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Kamov Ka-29 ‘16 yellow’

Source: Alan Wilson from Stilton, Peterborough, Cambs, UK via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kamov_Ka-29_%E2%80%9916_yellow%E2%80%99_\(24221038748\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kamov_Ka-29_%E2%80%9916_yellow%E2%80%99_(24221038748).jpg), CC BY SA 2.0



Continued: Updated Ka-29 Helicopters to Make Arctic Debut

Source: Anton Lavrov and Bogdan Stepovoy, “On the Polar Wind: ‘Sea Hunters’ Fly to the Arctic,” *Izvestia*, 29 June 2020. <https://iz.ru/1028439/anton-lavrov-bogdan-stepovoi/poliarnym-vetrom-v-arktiku-letiat-morskie-okhotniki>

On the Polar Wind: ‘Sea Hunters’ Fly to the Arctic

Squadrons of “sea hunters” -- updated Ka-29 helicopters – will fly in the Arctic. The first to get hands-on experience with these unique transport and combat machines are Pacific Fleet pilots from Kamchatka. Ka-29s are being upgraded to operate above the Arctic Circle and Northern Fleet crews will also start flying there in 2021. They will be used to supply military bases, move personnel, and patrol the polar region. The Ka-29 ...is an attack helicopter that can carry several tons of cargo.

Until recently Mi-8AMTSh (including its special “Arctic” version), Mi-26, and sometimes shipborne Ka-27 helicopters were mostly used in the Arctic.

The Arctic “sea hunters” are part of the 317th Composite Aviation Regiment, stationed outside Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy. There will be two detachments of “sea hunters”, each with four aircraft. After Kamchatka, aviation units of the Northern Fleet will be augmented with the updated Ka-29s. The 830th Separate Shipborne Antisubmarine Helicopter Regiment, which is stationed not far from the town of Severomorsk on the Kola peninsula will receive the aircraft.

The Ka-29 helicopter was in serial production in the 1980s but is not yet obsolete, according to military expert Dmitriy Boltenkov. The Kamovs can operate from dry land and from a ship. After modernization, they will be in demand for a long time to come because of their firepower, load-carrying capacity, and unique assault landing capabilities. In the Arctic the Ka-29 can patrol deserted tracts of land, take part in counter sabotage and rescue operations, and supply remote northern garrisons and military bases.”

Ka-29 crews are now busy familiarizing themselves with the machine. Exercises were held in Kamchatka in June, in which Pacific Fleet helicopters took part: They attacked shore and surface targets of a simulated enemy. In particular they destroyed practice targets representing hardened fire emplacements, fighting vehicles, and troops of an assault landing, firing 80-mm rockets and GSh-23 cannons. And not long-ago Northern Fleet pilots practiced supporting an assault landing and checked navigators’ preparations for carrying out missions in challenging weather conditions in the far north.

In all, more than 60 Ka-29s were produced. They were initially intended for carrying cargo, disembarking naval infantry from ships, and also for fire support of assault landings. The plan was that they would significantly expand the capabilities of the Project 1174 “Rhinceros” large amphibious landing ships, each of which would carry four helicopters. But after cutbacks to the Navy almost all the Ka-29s were mothballed, in the north of the country’s European part and in Kamchatka.

The overhaul, upgrade and restoration of the fleet of naval Ka-29s to technical readiness has been underway over the past several years. On the upgraded machines the main rotor masts and engine and transmission shafts have been replaced, and the paintwork refreshed. But most importantly, they have received modern weaponry and avionics. The helicopter can carry 16 assault troops at a cruising speed of 235 kilometers per hour. It has four mounting points for rocket pods, cannons, and bombs. It can also use the Shturm-V and Ataka antitank missile systems.

The cockpit, vital assemblies, and the engine are armored and can withstand a direct hit by a rifle bullet.... It can be fitted with screens over the engine exhaust outlets, for protection against heat-seeking missiles and electro-optical jammers.

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The Armed Forces are currently carrying out a wide-ranging modernization of their helicopters. A test of the brand-new Mi-28NM attack helicopter ended in Syria last year and in addition, a program to upgrade the Mi-35M starts very soon: It will get new armor, engines, and long-range optics to enable it to find and destroy targets several kilometers away. Devices are being developed for the upgraded Ka-52M, to enable it to talk directly to unmanned aerial vehicles. The pilots will be able to watch in real time images transmitted by drones, and subsequently control the drones in flight. This new technology will enable the crew to find targets behind enemy lines and deliver surprise strikes.