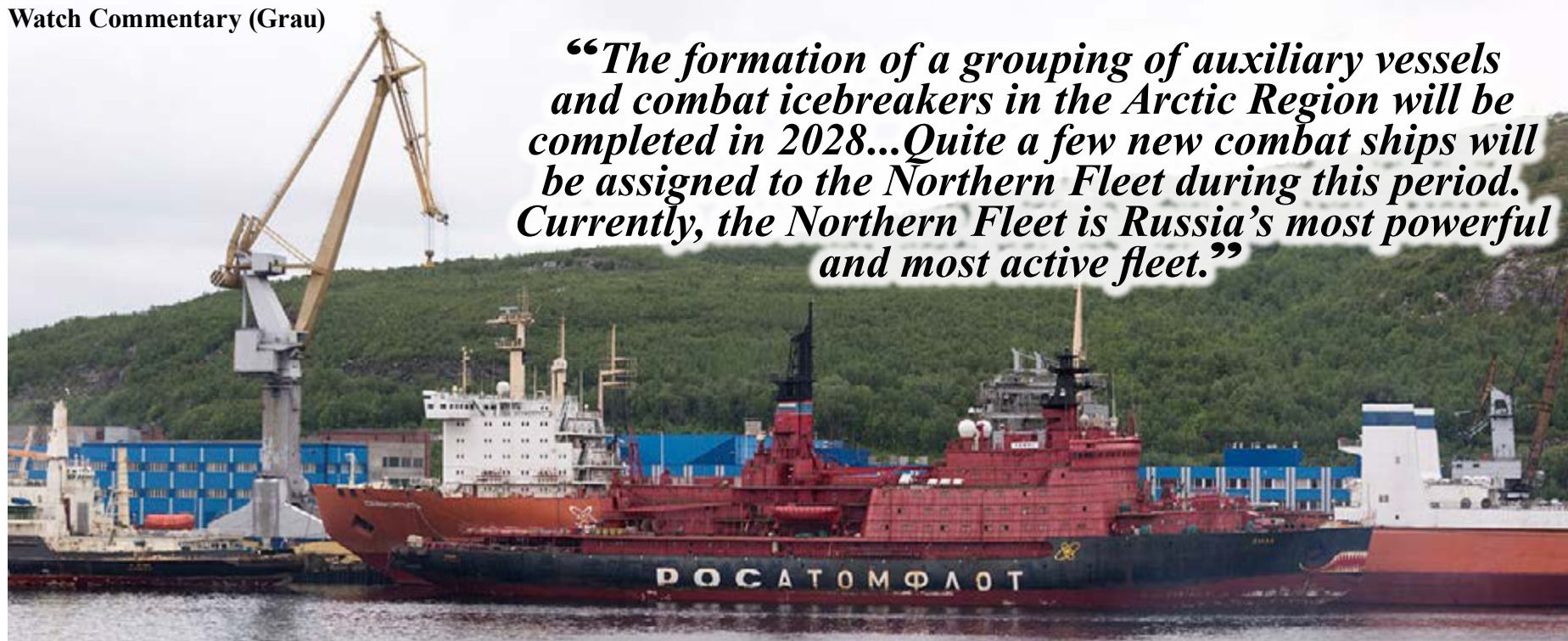




Russia Increasing Northern Fleet Year-Around Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has 41 active icebreakers with 13 under construction. Russia also has world's largest icebreakers and the most nuclear-powered icebreakers. Most are assigned to the Russian maritime fleet and can readily be converted into armed military icebreakers in time of crisis. But the Northern Fleet wants more of its own icebreakers immediately available in times of crisis and calm. The border control forces also need their own purpose-built icebreakers. Russia is already paying plenty for crushed ice, but it is also building her seaborne logistics capability in conjunction with its 346 acre military logistics center being built near Arkhangelsk [see: "Major Investment in Arctic Logistics," *OE Watch*, July 2019]. As the accompanying article points out, the CONEX container weapons systems can be put onto any vessel converting it into military strike or air defense vessel [see: "Russian Navy Adopting Modular 'Shipping Container-Based' Weapons," *OE Watch*, August 2020]. Of further interest is the mention that the Belomorsk [White Sea] naval base may become the headquarters of an arctic flotilla. Belomorsk is heavily engaged in ship and submarine repairs and test firings of weapons systems. A de facto flotilla of Northern Fleet surface ships has frequently been featured in summer training exercises of the Northern Fleet. Belomorsk always seems to be involved in their command and control. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



“The formation of a grouping of auxiliary vessels and combat icebreakers in the Arctic Region will be completed in 2028...Quite a few new combat ships will be assigned to the Northern Fleet during this period. Currently, the Northern Fleet is Russia’s most powerful and most active fleet.”

Yamal and other Russian Icebreakers.

Source: Christopher Michel / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>); [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yamal_and_other_Russian_Icebreakers_\(19619184325\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yamal_and_other_Russian_Icebreakers_(19619184325).jpg)

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>





Continued: Russia Increasing Northern Fleet Year-Around Capabilities

Source: Anton Lavrov and Dmitry Boltenkov, “The North Will Obtain a Powerful Icebreaker Grouping by 2028”, *Izvestia*, <https://iz.ru/1045486/dmitrii-boltenkov-anton-lavrov/oborona-po-flotski-k-2028-godu-sever-poluchit-moshchnuiu-ledokolnuiu-gruppirovku>, 9 August 2020.

The North Will Obtain a Powerful Icebreaker Grouping by 2028

The formation of a grouping of auxiliary vessels and combat icebreakers in the Arctic Region will be completed in 2028...Quite a few new combat ships will be assigned to the Northern Fleet during this period. Currently, the Northern Fleet is Russia's most powerful and most active fleet.

Prior to 1914, Russia did not have any military forces in its arctic possessions. The Arctic Ocean Flotilla was created during the First World War. Russia began to explore the northern latitudes and to build cities and ports beyond the Arctic Circle. The Port of Romanov-na-Murmane was built, now known as the Hero-City Murmansk.

The USSR began the active exploration of the Arctic Ocean and the search for, development, and production of raw materials in the Polar Region. As a result, two missions were assigned to the Soviet Northern Fleet during the Great Patriotic War. The first - the acceptance and defense of convoys with cargo, which arrived from the Allies in the Anti-Hitler Coalition. Second - ensuring the transportation of cargo along the waters of the Northern Sea Route. Problems hindered these missions. There was not a military ship basing system in the Arctic and there were no special military ships, capable of operations in ice. The navy had to send converted icebreaker-type vessels and fishing trawlers into battle.

After the end of World War II, the Arctic Ocean became a Cold War arena between the USSR and NATO. NATO and the Warsaw Pact planned to fight in arctic waters using only submarines. Neither side built any special military ships for combat in ice-choked waters. The Northern Fleet's surface forces of the postwar period were oriented more on operations in the Atlantic. In the event of hostilities, mobilized civilian vessels were to provide the security and support of shipping in the Northern Sea Route....

The change of the climatic conditions in the Arctic, the presence of significant Arctic oil, gas and mineral reserves, and the increased attention by a number of countries to the

Arctic created the need to increase Russian military presence on those territories, which the Russian Federation considers in its zone of interests and influence.

As a result, unprecedented military construction began in the most difficult climatic-geographic conditions. Besides the creation of outposts on the islands and training special arctic ground troops, Russia is actively building a military fleet, which has been adapted for operations in the northern latitudes.

The New Fleet

At the present time, two Project 23550 Icebreakers - the Ivan Papanin and the Nikolay Zubov are being built at the “Leningrad Admiralty Association” in St. Petersburg. They are capable of accomplishing the missions of a combat ship, an icebreaker, and a tug. They carry a broad spectrum of systems including naval guns, helicopters and assault boats. Containerized weapons systems can be accommodated on these ships so that they will become full-fledged combat icebreakers....The Papanin is the largest combat ship launched in the post-Soviet period....Besides breaking ice, combat icebreakers can interdict unauthorized foreign combat ships in the waters of the Northern Sea Route.

....Ships, outpost and garrisons require petroleum, oil, and lubricants....The Project 23130 Medium Tanker Academic Pashin joined the Northern Fleet at the beginning of 2020. It was not only the first tanker that was built for the Navy for several decades but also received everything necessary for operations in arctic conditions....Two Project 03182 small tankers are being built in Vladivostok. They are multipurpose arctic vessel platforms developed to transport various cargo and to participate in search and rescue and emergency response operations.

Simple icebreakers are also needed to support the deployment of ships and submarines. The first of them - the Project 21180 Ilya Muromets – is assigned to the Northern Fleet. The icebreaker Yevpatiy Kolovrat is being built for the Pacific Fleet's Kamchatka Grouping. Besides the primary mission of breaking a path in the ice, they can also accomplish an extensive spectrum of missions, such as supply and scientific activity.

The Western sanctions caused serious adjustments in the schedule for the construction of ships and vessels. The cable-laying vessels Volga and Vyatka, which are needed to construct various underwater communications and surveillance systems, have been stuck on the Zaliv shipyard's boat slips. Russia will have to resolve the issue of the development of underwater cable laying systems.

The Russian Navy plans to deploy new robotic combat systems for use in the Arctic waters. One of them is known as Garmoniya. The deployment of surveillance and other underwater objects will become its mission. It will also provide for the defense of both Russian submarine cruisers with ballistic missiles and our territories from the surprise launch of cruise missiles from under the water. The 20180 family of vessels are being built for these systems deployment. The first of them - the Ice Class Oceanographic Vessel the Academic Aleksandrov” - is ready.

Other ships and vessels are also being created and developed for sailing under Arctic conditions. Moreover, the auxiliary vessels that are being built are multifunctional and capable of accomplishing a wide range of missions.

The Russian Border Service has also ordered two slightly-modified combat icebreakers, which are similar to the Ivan Papanin. In Soviet times, the border fleet was considered part of the Navy's reserve in the event of war. Therefore, the border guards received practically the same ships as the navy, which were not optimum for peace time border missions. Missiles, sea mines and torpedoes were not required. In the post-Soviet period, the border guards are now ordering the ships they need, which have little in common with the ships of the new Russian Navy. The keel of the First Border Guards icebreaker- the Purga was laid on 25 July 2020 in Vyborg.

The mass media previously reported that the testing of CONEX-container-concealed missile systems will begin in the Northern Fleet in the near future. These are particularly significant for vessels of various civilian departments during mobilization. Having a supply of these container systems can substantially increase the Northern Fleet's fighting strength in a crisis period.

The Belomorsk Naval Base is part of the Northern Fleet. The Northern Fleet plans to create an arctic flotilla to conduct combat in the waters of the Arctic Ocean. At the present time, the base supports the repair, construction, and testing of combat ships and submarines....