



Going Blue by 2030: Upgrading and Refitting the Pacific Fleet

OE Watch Commentary: According to *Izvestia*, the neglected Russian Pacific Fleet is getting more ships and top-of-the-line systems. It is moving from a coastal defense and strategic submarine fleet to a true blue-water fleet by 2030. A veteran of the Pacific Fleet, the ASW Marshal Shaposhnikov will rejoin the Pacific Fleet as a rebuilt gun and missile frigate employing the latest Russian strike missile systems. It will still be ASW capable. Some readers may remember the Marshal Shaposhnikov from May 2010 when its naval infantry freed the tanker *Moskovskiy Universitet*, which had been seized by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden. Not a good day to be flying the Jolly Roger. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Before the end of this decade, the Pacific Fleet will again be a fully-fledged blue water fleet and will be able to operate on the expanses of a good half of the world’s oceans.”

Source: Military Historian Dmitriy Boltentkov, “Pacific renewal: Why the Pacific Fleet is receiving new ships,” *Izvestia*, 23 May 2020. iz.ru/1014468/dmitrii-boltentkov/obnovlenie-po-tikhomu-dlia-chego-tof-vooruzhaiut-novymi-korablami

Pacific renewal: Why the Pacific Fleet is receiving new ships

*Russia’s Pacific Fleet marked its 289th anniversary on 21 May. That day, Fleet Commander, Admiral Sergey Avakyan, announced that 15 new warships and support vessels will enter service with the fleet in the Far East by the end of the year. Among them are the Project 20385 corvette *Gremyashchiy*, submarine *Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy*, Project 12700 minesweeper *Yakov Balyayev*, counter-sabotage cutter *Raptor*, seagoing tug *Andrey Stepanov*, and two Project 23040 rescue cutters. With its new ships, the Pacific Fleet’s mission will also begin to change. It used to possess a powerful task force for long-range operations, but it will now receive a large number of relatively small ships with powerful missiles*

Naval forces in the Far East were neglected in Tsarist times because this part of the country, was remote from the center and relatively undeveloped. It was considered enough to send some ships to show the flag. Then, in the 1890s, the Russian imperial government began to rely on its base at Port Arthur. This led to the Russo-Japanese Battle of Tsushima, after which the Russian Empire’s naval forces in Vladivostok were minimal and the defense of Kamchatka was ignored altogether. After the Civil War the USSR had no naval forces whatsoever in this region. In the 1930s, everything changed.

Convoys with military hardware and dismantled ships were sent from the western part of the country eastward. Ships and submarines were assembled from parts in Vladivostok and work started on a submarine base on Kamchatka’s Krasheninnikov Peninsula. This base would later become known as the “submerged Russian serpents’ nest” in the Far East. At the same time, they began building shipyards so that some of the ships for the Navy could be made locally. The largest such enterprise was the Amur Shipyard in the city of Komsomol’sk-na-Amure. However, the region’s overall economic backwardness meant that all the major ships and half the submarines for the Pacific Fleet were built in the Soviet Union’s western parts, at yards in Leningrad, Nikolayev, and Severodvinsk.

The Pacific Fleet was at the peak of its powers in the early 1990s and operated in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It had several hundred warships, cutters, and submarines. The subsequent collapse of the country and the economic crisis of the 1990s led to scrapping much of the fleet ... In the 1990s and early 2000s, when Russia’s other fleets got something to upgrade their effectiveness, the Pacific Fleet ... received one missile cutter....

*The Pacific Fleet currently has three major commands. The Submarine Forces Command and the Joint Group of Forces and Assets in northeast Russia are both stationed on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The submarine forces command includes the atomic submarines, three of which -- the *Aleksandr Nevskiy*, *Vladimir Monomakh*, and *Ryazan* -- carry strategic nuclear missiles. The submarine forces command also has several Project 949A and 971 attack submarines. The Joint Group of Forces and Assets is responsible for the defense of Kamchatka and Chukotka and includes surface ships, aviation, and air defenses, and coastal forces.*

The Primorskaya Flotilla, based in Vladivostok, consists of surface ships and diesel submarines. Its forces regularly sail in the Pacific and Indian Oceans and sometimes even reach the Mediterranean.

During the reforms, Russia’s fleets received new ships and military hardware. The Black Sea and Baltic Fleets and the Caspian Flotilla have undergone major upgrades and a number of new submarines and surface ships have joined the Northern Fleet. The Pacific Fleet has remained in the shadows, although it has received two missile submarines and two corvettes.

Because Russia’s shipyards are busy renewing the fleets in the west, the Navy’s command the Navy’s command decided to modernize the existing assets of the Pacific Fleet. Soviet-built ships will undergo major refits, replacing their weaponry and updating their electronics.

(Continued)



Continued: Going Blue by 2030: Upgrading and Refitting the Pacific Fleet

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There are three such programs. The first is to modernize the Project 1234 small missile ships, based on replacing the Malakhit missile system with the newer Uran. The missile ship Smerch and then three of its peers will be upgraded.

The second program is the upgrade of the Project 1155 large antisubmarine warfare (ASW) ships to fire the Kalibr and Uran missile systems on board and, in the future, also the Tsirkon. The Marshal Shaposhnikov will join the fleet by the end of this year, and has been modernized to such an extent that its classification has been changed from large ASW to frigate. A further three ships will also receive a similar upgrade.

The third program is the most challenging. Project 949A atomic submarines will swap their Granit missiles for Kalibrs and Tsirkons. The first upgrade should be the Irkutsk, with the Chelyabinsk next....

Construction of new ships and submarines for the Pacific Fleet has been stepped up in recent years. The diesel submarine fleet will get six new 6363-type boats, the first of class of which, the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, will arrive by the end of the year. After that, it will also get Project 677 nonatomic submarines.

The surface ... fleet will receive the Project 20385 corvette Gremyashchiy by the end of the year, followed by the Provornyy. Unlike the Project 20380 corvettes, these ships carry the Kalibr missile system. The two corvettes already built at the Amur Ship Repair Yard, the Sovershennyy and Gromkiy, will be augmented by the Aldar Tsydenzhapov and Rezkii.

The Amur yard is regaining the status of main shipbuilder for the Pacific Fleet. In addition to four corvettes, it is also building six Project 22800 small missile ships and in the future it will build a series of 10 of these surface warships. Project 12700 minesweepers are also being built for the fleet. The first of class, the Yakov Balyeyev, should commence its service in Kamchatka by the end of the year as part of the 114th Brigade of waterway protection ships. It will be followed by the Petr Ilichev, and others.

The Yantar yard in Kaliningrad is building two Project 11711 amphibious landing ships, the Vladimir Andreyev and Vasilii Trushin, which will join the fleet in 2023-24 and be the first of their type. The pandemic delayed laying the keel the multirole amphibious landing ship Vladivostok at the Zaliv yard in Kerch' in May 2020, but it will happen soon. Within a few years, the Sevastopol' will be launched.

The main ships for distant seas will be the Project 22350 frigates and corvettes of the new Project 20386 family, which are currently under construction at the Severnaya Verf shipyard in Saint Petersburg. How many of these will go to Pacific Fleet has not been announced.

Before the end of this decade the Pacific Fleet will again be a fully-fledged blue water fleet and will be able to operate on the expanses of a good half of the world's oceans. Armed with the various latest missile systems, such as the Bulava, Kalibr, and Tsirkon and with its reach extended to the next level, the Pacific Fleet will be many times more powerful than it was in Soviet times.

Source: Alexsi Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, "Navy to get Frigate armed with Tsirkon," *Izvestia*, 22 May 2020. <https://iz.ru/1013981/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/novoe-giperzvuchanie-vmf-poluchit-fregat-osnashchennyi-tsirkonami>

Navy to get Frigate armed with Tsirkon

The refitted Project 1155 frigate Marshal Shaposhnikov will commence sea trials by the end of the year. It was previously an ASW [antisubmarine warfare] ship, now with radically increased capabilities and set to be the first ship in the Pacific Fleet carrying Tsirkon hypersonic missiles. The Shaposhnikov will also be armed with subsonic Kalibr and supersonic Yakhonts missiles. It will be the first of class for a whole series of updated Project 1155 large ASW ships....

The frigate joined the Navy's order of battle in 1986 and is currently at the Dalzavod ship repair center, where its modernization is being completed. Most ships of this design did not receive strike missiles, because they had a narrow specialized role -- to hunt submarines.

But the Shaposhnikov is getting a major update and being made multipurpose. More than 20 percent of its structure was dismantled and rebuilt from scratch during the work. These changes were made so that modern equipment and missile systems could be installed.

Izvestiya reported earlier that the frigate will receive launchers for Kalibr cruise missiles. These are multipurpose -- they can also be used to fire the hypersonic Tsirkon. The Kalibr has an effective range of about 1,400 kilometers -- its low flight altitude and highly precise navigation make it invisible even to the most hi-tech detection systems. It can also strike at terrestrial targets.

The Tsirkon can accelerate to hypersonic speed (Mach 6-8) and hit targets up to 500 kilometers away. It is an invincible weapon -- air defense antimissile systems simply cannot keep up with it. The frigate will also get an A-190-01 100-mm gun with stealth technologies. And it retains its ASW capabilities....

Mikhail Barabanov, a senior researcher at the Center for Analysis of Strategy and Technologies, stated "Nowadays any capital ship capable of operating on distant high seas is essential to the Navy because few of them are being built. After its upgrade the Shaposhnikov will be not an ASW but a multirole ship. It will be able to perform the entire gamut of missions that could be assigned to it..."