



# Ukrainian Capabilities Challenge Russian Superiority in the Black Sea

**OE Watch Commentary:** Tensions around the Black Sea are on the rise after the successful test of two Neptune missiles by the Ukrainian military. According to Ukrainian officials, the missiles successfully destroyed two targets, at distances of 85 and 110 kilometers from the launch site, with the missiles reaching their destinations “almost simultaneously.” While *Izvestia* emphasizes that these weapons systems are far from the most advanced, Russia’s response to the tests underscores Russian concerns about growing Ukrainian capabilities in the region.

Konstantine Sivkov, a member of the Russian Academy of Missile and Artillery Science, described the new missile system as a credible threat to Russian superiority in the Black Sea, noting that it can strike warships of the Russian Navy. He emphasized the need for measures to counter these threats, such as developing a control system, strengthening the intelligence system in the theater of operations of the Black Sea, and “monitoring the movements of Ukrainian ships to the places where these missiles are likely to launch and prevent them from moving there.”

The article notes that Sivkov essentially described the Neptune missile as an update to the older Soviet X-35 missile, and also drew comparisons between the Neptune and the American Harpoon missile, which first entered service in 1977. Sivkov also asserted that the range on the Ukrainian missile is much less than those employed by the Russian military.

The article also points out that the rhetoric out of Ukraine has heightened with the development of the Neptune missile, writing that Alexander Turchinov, former secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, threatened to use the system to “destroy” the new bridge from Russia to Crimea. Therefore, while the missile system is viewed as not quite as advanced as those available to Russia, it still represents a threat not only to Russian superiority in the Black Sea region, but more specifically, to Russia’s hold on the annexed territory of Crimea and its continued influence in SE Ukraine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rodger)**



*Neptune Cruise Missile.*

Source: Адміністрація Президента України via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neptune\\_cruise\\_missile\\_05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neptune_cruise_missile_05.jpg) CCA SA-4.0 Intl

***“Of course, a certain threat exists, because an anti-ship missile is a serious danger. They can strike even on warships of the Russian Navy...”***

**Source:** “Военный эксперт оценил испытания украинской ракеты ‘Нептун’ (Military Expert Assesses Tests of Ukrainian Neptune Missiles),” *Izvestia*, 31 May 2020. <https://iz.ru/1017951/2020-05-31/voennyi-ekspert-otcenil-ispytaniia-ukrainskoi-rakety-neptun>

*Domestic missiles have a much greater range than Ukrainian missiles, announced Konstantin Sivkov, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Missile and Artillery Sciences, on Sunday on May 31, on the NSN.*

*“Of course, a certain threat exists, because an anti-ship missile is a serious danger. They can strike even on warships of the Russian Navy. We’ll have to take measures to counter such threats - provide a control system, strengthen the intelligence system at the Black Sea theater of military operations, monitor the movements of Ukrainian ships to the places where these missiles are likely to be launched and prevent them from moving there,” he noted.*

*According to Sivkov, Neptune is a version of the old Soviet X-35 missile, and by its basic characteristics it also resembles the American “Harpoon.”*

*A military analyst spoke in detail about the capabilities of Ukrainian weapons, comparing their characteristics with Russian and American [weapons].*

*“Russia now has modifications of missiles having a range of about 2–2.5 times greater than those in Ukraine,” he added.*

*The day before, the head of the design bureau “Luch,” Oleg Korostelev, announced the successful testing of the Neptune R-360 cruise missiles. It is noted that the charges almost simultaneously destroyed two targets at different distances. The firing was carried at the two objectives in the Black Sea with an interval of two seconds.*