



Russian Pacific Fleet rearming Naval Infantry with BMP-3F

OE Watch Commentary: According to the excerpted article from *Izvestia*, a Russian daily broadsheet newspaper, naval infantry from the Pacific Fleet will be the first to get the BMP-3F. As explained in (“Potential Equipping of Russian Naval Infantry with the BMP-3F,” *OE Watch*, November 2020) field-testing of the Naval Infantry version of the BMP-3 took place during the Kavkaz 2020 exercise. The field tests were successful and the Eastern Military District’s two naval infantry brigades are being reequipped. Although heliborne landings are preferred for initial Russian amphibious landing, this upgrades their direct amphibious assault capability. Initially, one battalion per brigade will be so equipped.

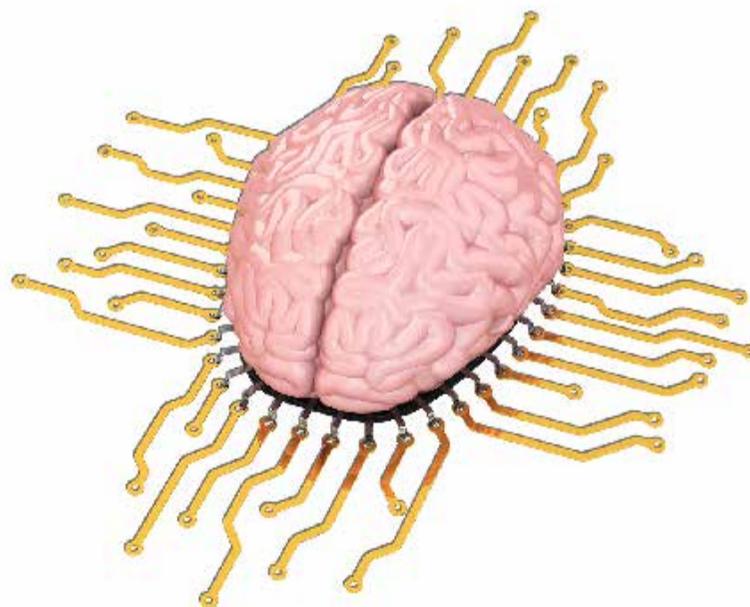
The recent (“Kurile Islands Getting Up-armored,” *OE Watch*, December 2020), addressed the deployment of the T-72B3 main battle tank to the Naval Infantry of the Pacific Fleet. These articles demonstrate not only the strengthening of the Eastern Military District’s defensive capabilities, but also of the increasing role of the Naval Infantry in Russia’s Rapid Reaction Force. The Airborne Forces and Naval Infantry have long been the major part of Russia’s rapid reaction capability, but Naval Infantry modernization has lagged. In 2010, Somali pirates seized the Russian oil tanker *MV Moscow University*. Russian naval infantry from the Udaloy-class *Marshal Shaposhnikov* recaptured the tanker. It’s a long way from the Pacific to Africa, but as Russia negotiates for a naval base in Somalia, Russia expands its limited blue-water capability with ports on both sides of the Suez Canal. Depending on Somali basing, the Pacific Fleet may play a bigger role in the Arabian Ocean. Upgrading its naval infantry could support that role. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“According to the Russian Ministry of Defense, Pacific Fleet naval infantrymen will be the first to get the new BMP-3F. One battalion in each of the two Eastern Military District Naval Infantry Brigades will be upgraded. The BMP-3F combat vehicle was previously supplied only for export. This vehicle will dramatically increase the firepower and mobility of the “Black Berets” in the Far East.”

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Continued: Russian Pacific Fleet rearming Naval Infantry with BMP-3F

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul, “С корабля навал: дальневосточные морпехи получают тяжелую бронетехнику (If attacked from the sea: Far Eastern Naval Infantrymen receiving heavily armored technology),” *Izvestia* (Russian daily broadsheet newspaper), 24 December 2020. <https://iz.ru/1103734/anton-lavrov-roman-kretsul/s-korablia-napal-dalnevostochnye-morpekhi-poluchat-tiazheluiu-bronetekniku>

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Delivery of the new armored vehicles will begin next year [2021]. The 40th Separate Naval Infantry Brigade on Kamchatka will initially receive the armored vehicles. Earlier Primorye-based [Sakhalin Island] 155th Brigade Acting Commander Captain 2nd Rank Igor Tatarchenko reported that his unit’s subunits will also get the BMP-3F in the near future.

*Those vehicles disembarked from a landing ship in support of Russian naval infantrymen for the first time at the “Kavkaz-2020” Strategic Command-Staff Exercises that took place at Opuk Range in September. *Izvestiya* previously reported that the experiment was successful.*

Increased attention is being paid to reequipping the Pacific Fleet Naval Infantry. In recent years, it has received not only BTR-82A armored transport vehicles but also T-80BV tanks, and also thoroughly modernized BMP-2Ms [Armored Infantry Vehicles]. Unique exercises occurred in the Far East in August involving the Naval Infantry. The “Black Berets” disembarked from the sea and from the air simultaneously onto the [Arctic] Chukotka Peninsula for the first time. Approximately 4,000 military personnel and more than 800 pieces of equipment participated in the opposing-force brigade maneuvers.

According to Military Historian Dmitriy Boltentsov, “In Soviet times, the 55th Naval Infantry Division, which was deployed in Primorye, started to receive the upgraded version of the BMP-3 that had just been accepted into the inventory. They managed to reequip one battalion, but then the 1990s arrived and this process was halted. The contemporary naval variants have powerful weaponry - two guns and several machineguns. The subunits’ firepower in these vehicles is much higher than in the BTR-82. Furthermore, they are better armored. All of this is particularly important while conducting amphibious landings. The naval infantrymen will have all of the needed weapons in order to suppress enemy weapon emplacements. Furthermore, the tracked vehicles have better cross-country capability, and this is critical, since wheeled vehicle mobility is often limited on the Pacific coast.”

In recent years, the Naval Infantry has been equipped with new tanks and self-propelled guns which correspond to the new missions assigned to these forces. “Today the Naval Infantry is part of the rapid reaction forces. These subunits can be loaded onto a ship and set off for any point of the world. The availability of heavy weapons permits them to independently accomplish any missions.”

The total strength of the Russian Naval Infantry is estimated to be 12-13,000 personnel. Three fleets have one brigade each. The Pacific Fleet has two. The Caspian Sea Flotilla, has one regiment which was formed in 2018. According to the Ministry of Defense, the “Black Berets” equipment level is maintained at the 100 percent. All of the subunits are at permanent combat readiness and, together with the Airborne Troops, constitute the base of the Russian rapid reaction forces.

There are 2-3 naval infantry battalions and one air assault battalion in each of the brigades. A portion of the personnel are parachute trained. But, the “Black Berets” have a “heavier” structure than the airborne. There are more armored vehicles in their units. There are tanks and self-propelled artillery and air defense missile systems in many of them. Some brigades have “Grad” multiple rocket launcher systems assigned.

There are plans to improve the naval infantrymen’s delivery systems. Initially, they planned to deploy the first larger “Mistral” Class universal landing ships in the Pacific Ocean. The needed infrastructure for their basing had already been created at Vladivostok. The breach of contract by France due to the anti-Russian sanctions did not halt these plans.

The keels of two Russian equivalents to the “Mistrals” - the Project 23900 universal landing ships - were laid at Kerch’s “Zaliv” Shipyard this year. Besides the traditional amphibious landing techniques, they will be able to redeploy the “Black Berets” to the coast using helicopters and speedboats.

The Northern Fleet was augmented by the Project 11711 Large Landing Ship (BDK) “Ivan Gren” in 2018. The acceptance into the fleet’s composition of the second ship of the same type the “Petr Morgunov” is expected soon. It is in the test phase right now.

The conventional BMP-3, which is being supplied to the Ground Troops, also has an amphibious capability. But it was developed to negotiate rivers and small bodies of fresh water. The designers had to rework it for use by the Naval Infantry. They modified the air intake to an extendable telescoping tube. They installed anti-wave barriers on the hull and turret and increased their buoyancy and stability on the water. As a result, they can safely employ the vehicle with sea waves of up to Sea Force 3.

The vehicle is capable of being in the water for up to seven hours. In the process, its speed is higher than that of the tactical variant and reaches 10 kilometer per hours. The tracked vehicle accelerates to a speed of up to 70 kilometers per hour on a good road on land and 45 kilometers per hour on a dirt road.

The naval variant lacks the self-ditching feature and additional armor of the modernized ground-forces BMP-3. On the other hand, the naval BMP retained the firepower of the ground-forces version. A 100-millimeter low ballistic gun permits it to fire at point blank range and also along a high trajectory. Guided antitank missiles are also launched through the tube. Furthermore, it has a rapid-fire 30-millimeter gun and machineguns...