

Amphibious Landing Force Upgraded in Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

Russia is addressing its aging amphibious landing craft fleet by giving priority to upgrades of its Arctic capability, underscoring Russia's anticipation of the growing importance of the Northern Sea Route. According to a recent article in the *Independent Barents Observer*, an independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English, which is now blocked in Russia, all the Russian fleets have provided amphibious lift to Syria. This near constant use has had an impact on the aging amphibious landing ships, many of which were built in Poland during the Cold War. Repair and refitting of the current vessels is ongoing, but state-of-the-art vessels are also entering the naval inventory. According to the *Observer*, which closely monitors Russia's Northern Fleet, the Pyotr Morgunov has joined the Ivan Gren, which was the first of at least four new large amphibious landing ships. A third should also join the Northern Fleet in 2023. In 2010, Russia contracted to purchase two Mistral class amphibious landing ships from France. France cancelled the order after Russia seized the Crimea. The Ivan Gren class vessels are much smaller than the Mistral class amphibious landing craft, which displace 10,000 more tons and carry 16 helicopters.



The Pyotr Morgunov has joined the Northern Fleet.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense

“The landing ship is able to carry up to 300 marines, alternatively 13 tanks, 36 armored personnel carriers, or 30 trucks. It can also carry two Ka-29 transport and attack helicopters, alternatively one Ka-52K attack helicopter.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Brand new large landing ship sails into home port of Severomorsk,” *The Independent Barents Observer* (an independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English now blocked in Russia), 2 February 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/2021/02/brand-new-large-landing-ship-sails-home-port-severomorsk>

Early in the morning of the 1st of February, the 135-meter-long ship sailed into the Kola Bay and moored on the waterfront of the Northern Fleet headquarters in Severomorsk. On board was a crew of about 100 men.

The Pyotr Morgunov is the newest vessel in the powerful Russian fleet, and the second large landing ship of Project 11711. It follows its sister ship Ivan Gren that was incorporated in the Northern Fleet in 2018. Both vessels were built at the Yantar yard in Baltiisk. The landing ship is able to carry up to 300 naval infantry, alternatively 13 tanks, 36 armored personnel carriers, or 30 trucks. It can also carry two Ka-29 transport and attack helicopters, alternatively one Ka-52K attack helicopter.

The Pyotr Morgunov and Ivan Gren significantly contribute to an upgrade of the Northern Fleet's troop transportation capability. Before that, the Northern Fleet had four landing ships Kondopoga, Aleksandr Otrakovskiy, Greogiy Pobedonosets and Olenegorskiy Gornyak, all of them built in the period from 1976 to 1985. The 43-year-old Olenegoskiy Gornyak rejoined the Northern Fleet in 2019 after a five-year refit.