

Russia Extending Coastal Defense Capability in Arctic

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

According to pro-government news service *Izvestia*, the Northern Sea Route will have an effective missile defense against hostile vessels. According to the excerpted article, more improved Bal anti-ship missiles will be stationed in the Arctic. The Bal is a sea-skimming subsonic missile that reportedly flies 10-15 meters above the sea surface, drops down to 3-5 meters above the surface on final attack and strikes the target horizontally and explodes after penetrating the ship. It uses inertial guidance, satellite observation, and homing radar. The Bal will augment the Bastion system already in use in region since 2018.



The Bal anti-ship missile system.

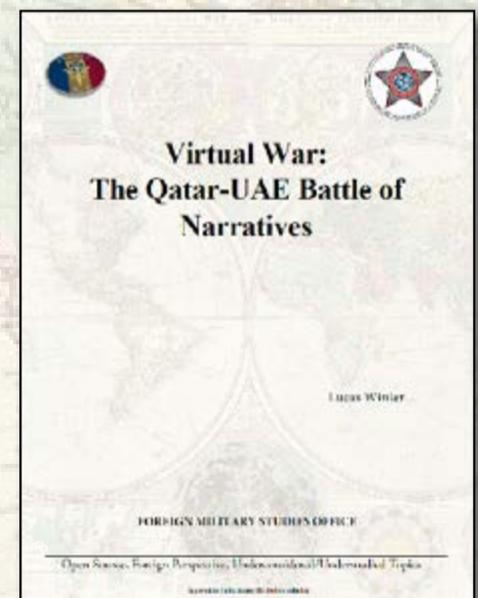
Source: Russian Ministry of Defense

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VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter
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For much of the past decade, Qatar and the UAE have been engaged in a battle of narratives. Their ongoing dispute dates to 2011 and is rooted in foreign policy and ideological disagreements. Following a hack of the Qatari News Agency in 2017, the nature of Qatari-Emirati competition shifted from being primarily the purview of government officials, spokespeople, journalists, analysts and authors, to one where coders, influencers, trolls and cybersecurity experts played a vital role. Since then, both countries have worked to increase their capabilities in the cyber and informational domains. Their relationship in these domains has evolved into one of strategic competition. This paper looks at how these dynamics may affect the regional operational environment, with a particular focus on the cyber and informational domains.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>

Continued: Russia Extending Coastal Defense Capability in Arctic

Source: Roman Kretsul and Aleksy Ramm, “Дали «Бал»: Севморпуть получит новые береговые комплексы (Further on the Bal. Northern Sea Route to get new Coastal Missiles),” *Izvestia* (pro-government news service), 7 April 2021. <https://iz.ru/1147518/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/dali-bal-sevmorput-poluchit-novye-beregovye-kompleksy>

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The first systems have already begun combat alert duty on Franz Josef Land. Subunits of coastal missile forces will be deployed later in other regions. At an end-of-year collegiate session late in 2020, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu reported that the armed forces now have 74 percent of the required number of Bal and Bastion systems. He also pointed out that the Ministry is steadily growing the infrastructure in the Arctic. “The military base on Ostrov Zemlya Aleksandry [island] is now completely furnished. This is the world’s only facility on a latitude of 80 degrees north. In all, it has 334 buildings and structures. The runway at the Nagurskaya airfield has been extended to 3.5 kilometers.”

The Bal coastal missile system was commissioned in 2008. It is designed to protect coastline and straits, and also to provide cover for naval bases. It fires subsonic missiles singly or in salvos of up to 32. After reloading (which takes 30-40 minutes), the system is ready to fire a second salvo. The Bal is a mobile system based on the MZKT-7930 chassis, consisting of two self-propelled command posts, up to four launchers with eight Kh-35/Kh-35U cruise missiles each, and also transporter-loader vehicles. It has an effective range of more than 120 kilometers, and is equipped with night vision devices and modern instrumentation. Thanks to a brand-new navigation system, the Bal can quickly change launch positions. Deployment time is only 10 minutes.

“This is the latest stage in the deployment of our Arctic group of forces,” military expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told Izvestiya. “This means not just technologies for being aware of the situation in the air, on the surface, and under the water, but also positioning the firepower. Clearly, we’re not going to invoke it in international waters but our territorial waters must be reliably protected, including by such potent systems as the Bal. The Northern Sea Route passes through international and territorial waters and we’re not going to allow anyone, especially warships, unfettered access to our territory. For merchant ships there are certain rules, and they can register to proceed into territorial waters in certain circumstances. But penetration by warships, especially in the event of military conflict, will be interdicted, that’s 100 percent.”

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The Bal is not the first weapon to be stationed along the Northern Sea Route. A battery of Bastions [mobile Russian coastal missile defense system] was deployed on Ostrov Kotel’nyy in 2018. Kotel’nyy is the largest of the New Siberian Islands, situated between the Laptev and East Siberian Seas.

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In recent years Russia has been actively reinforcing the Navy’s coastal forces, especially the missile and artillery forces, which are upgrading from the obsolete Redut and Rubezh to the latest Bastion and Bal systems. Furthermore, modern battalions are being formed and coastal missile regiments are being reorganized into full-fledged brigades.

Large-scale deliveries to units of the new coastal missile systems began in 2015, and the first to receive them was the Pacific Fleet’s 72nd Separate Coastal Missile Brigade. One of its Bastion batteries was deployed to Iturup Island and a Bal battery went to Kunashir Island in November 2016.