

Russian Northern Fleet Vessels Move into Area of NATO Baltic Sea Exercise

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

According to the following articles from the Norway-based English- and Russian-language *Independent Barents Observer*, the Russian Navy is conducting numerous exercises and naval training operations in or near Arctic waters. The Russian Northern Sea Fleet recently conducted its shake-down training of its latest large landing ship, the “Pyotr Morgunov.” The ship joined the missile cruiser “Marshal Ustinov” and the anti-submarine ship “Vice-Admiral Kulakov” in a cruise from Arctic waters around Scandinavia to the

Baltic Sea. Presumably, the ships will continue on to St. Petersburg to participate in the annual Russian Navy Day parade of ships. The nuclear-powered battle cruiser *Pyotr Velikiy* is also in the Barents Sea, apparently in response to NATO and U.S. naval activities. The Russian big ships of the Pacific Fleet are out as well. The cruise will also provide an opportunity for both NATO and Russia to observe each other’s seamanship and responsiveness of the involved navies.

“Combat training will be conducted during the inter-fleet crossing from the Barents Sea around Scandinavia to the Baltic Sea. Russia’s navy move happens simultaneously as NATO kicks off its anti-submarine warfare exercise Dynamic Mongoose outside Norway”

Source: Thomas Nilsen “Northern Fleet moves large warships to Baltic Sea”, *Independent Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 29 June 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/06/northern-fleet-moves-large-warships-baltic-sea>

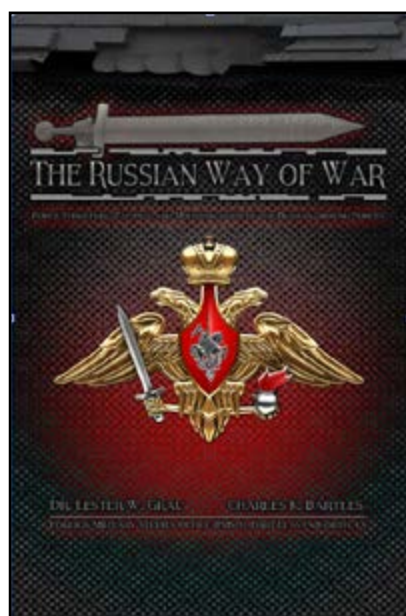
Three of the largest warships of Russia’s Northern Fleet sailed out from Severomorsk on the morning of 29 June on a westbound course in the Barents Sea. According to the Northern Fleet, the vessels are the missile cruiser “Marshal Ustinov”, the anti-submarine ship “Vice-Admiral Kulakov” and the brand new large landing ship “Pyotr Morgunov” along with the smaller rescue tugboat “Altai”.

The Northern Fleet announcement states that while sailing to the Baltic Sea, the navy ships will “conduct maneuvering training” and “several exercises” as part of the Russian navy’s “combat training for surface warships.” It does not state during which part of the voyage such combat exercises will take place, but the Northern Fleet has not issued any NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) warnings for any parts of international waters outside Norway.

Traditionally, in late June and early July, the Northern Fleet used to sail a warship and a nuclear submarine from the Kola Peninsula to the Navy Parade taking place in the waters outside St. Petersburg. Navy Day is on Sunday, July 25.

While the Russian warships sail the Barents Sea, the U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class destroyer “USS Roosevelt” sails into the waters outside northern Norway to maintain U.S. Navy readiness in the Arctic. The warship, which is part of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, stated on 28 June that it conducted a live-fire gunnery exercise in the Arctic, but did not specify the exact location of the exercise.

On Tuesday, June 29, NATO’s annual anti-submarine warfare exercise Dynamic Mongoose 2021 starts off the coast of Norway. Participating nations are Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Norway. Maritime surveillance aircraft from Germany, Norway, the U.S. and Canada are also participating from the airports at Keflavik, Andøya and Lossiemouth. The exercise will last until July 9.



THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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“Following the loading operation, the landing ship set out to the Barents Sea where it teamed up with missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov, anti-submarine vessel Vice-Admiral Kulakov and support ship Altay in an exercise.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Russia’s new landing ship sails into Pechenga Bay, takes on board a battalion of special operations troops”, *Independent Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 18 June 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/06/russias-new-landing-ship-sails-pechenga-bay-takes-board-30-armored-vehicles-and>

The Pyotr Morgunov this week cruised into the far northern bay on the Barents Sea coast few kilometers from Norway. The ship drifted onto the shore, whereupon armored personnel carriers, trucks and a big number of special operations soldiers got onboard. The landing vessel is the Russian Navy’s newest ship of the kind, incorporated in the Northern Fleet early this year.

According to the Northern Fleet press service, the loading of the Pyotr Morgunov was part of a rehearsal aimed at testing vessel capacity. Several dozen vehicles were taken onboard the ship, including more than 30 BTR-80 personnel carriers and trucks, as well as a battalion of Spetsnaz from the nearby base of Sputnik. Following the loading operation, the landing ship set out to the Barents Sea where it teamed up with missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov, anti-submarine vessel Vice-Admiral Kulakov and support ship Altay in an exercise.

The loading operation in the Pechenga Bay follows a similar operation by sister ship Ivan Gren few weeks ago. The 135 meter long 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 are built at the Yantar yard in Baltiisk. The landing ships are able to carry up to 300 naval infantry, alternatively 13 tanks, 36 armored personnel carriers, or 30 trucks. They can also carry two Ka-29 transport and attack helicopters, alternatively one Ka-52K attack helicopter.

“On 1 July, the nuclear-powered battle cruiser Pyotr Velikiy set course for the Barents Sea. It follows several of the Russian Navy’s biggest ships.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Russia’s biggest naval vessels are out at sea”, *Independent Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 2 July 2021. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2021/07/russias-biggest-naval-vessels-are-out-sea>

On 1 July, the nuclear-powered battle cruiser Pyotr Velikiy set course for the Barents Sea. It follows several of the Russian Navy’s biggest ships. According to the Northern Fleet, the battle cruiser will engage in several days training in the far northern waters. That includes exercises on air defense and combat, as well as mapping of airspace and underwater situations. The 252 meter long Pyotr Velikiy is the Russian Navy’s biggest ship. It has a crew of more than 700 men and a wide range of armament.

The nuclear-powered Kirov-class vessel will be back in Severomorsk, the Northern Fleet headquarters, in due time for Russian Navy Day 25th of July, according to the Northern Fleet press service. The Pyotr Velikiy set out to sea only few days after missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov, anti-submarine ship Vice-Admiral Kulakov and the brand new large landing ship Pyotr Morgunov started an inter-fleet crossing from the Barents Sea around Scandinavia to the Baltic Sea.

Also the Russian Pacific Fleet now has its biggest ships at sea. According to the Navy, missile cruiser Varyag and frigate Marshal Shaposhnikov have engaged in missile and artillery firing in the Pacific. The corvettes Hero of the Russian Federation Aldar Tsydenzhapov, Sovershenny and Gromkiy are also involved in training which included “elimination of enemy aircraft carrier groups.”