

## Russia Practices Area Denial in Gulf of Finland

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OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin daily newspaper *Izvestiya*, discusses Russian plans to practice closing the Gulf of Finland by way of a combination of naval mines and coastal defense missile systems. According to *Izvestiya*, this exercise, which is part of the larger Zapad-2021 strategic exercise, will involve the placement of the Bal and Bastion coastal defense missile system on Kotlin Island (near Kronstadt) for the first time. (For more on the Bal and Bastion coastal defense missile system, see: “Russia Extending Coastal Defense Capability in the Arctic,” *OE Watch*, June

2021). The article also points out how with the deployment of these missile systems, “it will be possible to cover the entrance to the Gulf of Finland,” specifically, “this completely protects the country’s second-largest city from a possible strike from the sea.” Ultimately, while western military analysts focused on operational aspects of Zapad-2021, Russian coastal defenses protecting Saint Petersburg received an upgrade.

“The Defense Ministry will soon conduct major exercises with the Leningrad Naval Base coastal troops dedicated to the defense of Saint Petersburg from the sea. Drilling the laying of a minefield in the Gulf of Finland will be one of the elements of these exercises. The minefield laying will be simulated by Baltic Fleet ships. At the same time, the latest Bal and Bastion systems will be deployed on Kotlin Island near Kronstadt for the first time. Experts note that this will allow the entire Gulf of Finland to be completely blocked for possible adversaries”

**Source:** Anton Lavrov and Anna Cherepanova, “С «Бала» на корабль: Минобороны отработает перекрытие Финского залива (From ‘Bal’ to Ship: Defense Ministry to Rehearse Blocking Gulf of Finland),” *Izvestiya* (large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 27 July 2021. <https://iz.ru/1198466/anton-lavrov-anna-cherepanova/s-bala-na-korabl-minoborony-otrabotaet-perekrytie-finskogo-zaliva>

*The Defense Ministry will soon conduct major exercises with the Leningrad Naval Base coastal troops dedicated to the defense of Saint Petersburg from the sea. Drilling the laying of a minefield in the Gulf of Finland will be one of the elements of these exercises. The minefield laying will be simulated by Baltic Fleet ships. At the same time, the latest Bal and Bastion systems will be deployed on Kotlin Island near Kronstadt for the first time. Experts note that this will allow the entire Gulf of Finland to be completely blocked for possible adversaries. These exercises of the Leningrad Naval Base will become part of the preparations for the largest strategic maneuvers this year -- Zapad-2021...*

*In June, Baltic Fleet Commander Admiral Aleksandr Nosatov announced that coastal missile units in Leningradskaya and Kaliningradskaya Oblasts received Bal and Bastion mobile coastal missile systems. The missilemen have already begun combat training. During the upcoming exercise, the fleet will practice laying minefields in the area of Moshchnyy Island or Gogland Island under the cover of missile systems, military historian Dmitriy Boltenkov assumed...*

*With the deployment of the latest Bal and Bastion missile systems on Kotlin Island, it will be possible to cover the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, starting from Hanko and Masuria. This completely protects the country’s second-largest city from a possible strike from the sea. Given the importance of Saint Petersburg nowadays, it is not difficult to understand how important such exercises are, Dmitriy Boltenkov concluded...*

*In recent years, Russia has been actively improving defenses in the Baltic Sea and strengthening coastal forces of the fleet, including missile and artillery troops. They are being rearmed from the obsolete Redut and Rubezh to the latest Bastion and Bal systems. The crews of Bal and Bastion coastal missile systems became part of the Leningrad Naval Base in the end of last year. Modern coastal missile systems are deployed in Kaliningradskaya Oblast as well.*

*The Bal coastal missile system was delivered to the Baltic Fleet in 2008. It is designed to protect the coast and straits, as well as to cover naval bases. The Bal system is capable of firing single missiles and salvos of up to 32 missiles. After reloading (which takes 30-40 minutes), the coastal missile system is ready to fire a second salvo. The mobile Bal is built on MZKT-7930 chassis and includes up to two self-propelled command posts, up to four launchers with eight Kh-35/Kh-35U cruise missiles each, as well as transporter and reloading vehicles. Its operating range reaches 260 km. Thanks to the latest navigation system, the system can quickly change launch positions and can be deployed in just 10 minutes.*

*The unique Bastion system, with 24 Yakhont supersonic missiles, was adopted in 2010. It is capable of hitting targets at a distance of up to 600 km. Due to the radar homing head, these missiles can hit not only ships but also ground targets with particular accuracy...*

## Continued: Russia Practices Area Denial in the Gulf of Finland

**Continued Source:** Anton Lavrov and Anna Cherepanova, “С «Бала» на корабль: Минобороны отработает перекрытие Финского залива (From ‘Bal’ to Ship: Defense Ministry to Rehearse Blocking Gulf of Finland),” *Izvestiya* (large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 27 July 2021. <https://iz.ru/1198466/anton-lavrov-anna-cherepanova/s-bala-na-korabl-minoborony-otrabotaet-perekrytie-finskogo-zaliva>



**300P Bastion-P coastal defense missile system.**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/100th-anniversary-Southern-Military-District/i-7NGcQ9x/0/8053e00d/X2/100RostovonDon5May2018-45-X2.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0



**Bal-E coastal defense missile system.**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2015/i-Bmxs6QC/0/fee5e83e/X2/MAKS2015part6-28-X2.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0