



Increasing Russia's "Brown-Water" Navy

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from the 8 October 2018 edition of *Izvestiya* describes how Russia is integrating naval fires to support ground operations. Russia is integrating Project 21630 Buyan small artillery ships (MAKs) and Project 21631 Buyan-M small guided-missile ships (MRKs) into the Strelets reconnaissance, command and control, and communications system (KRUS) [комплекса разведки, управления и связи (КРУС)]. The Strelets system allows for the integration of fires throughout the ground, air, and sea domains. If these ships are successfully integrated into the Strelets KRUS, these naval platforms will provide a significant enhancement of capabilities to ground component commanders (ground forces, airborne, naval infantry), when available. The Buyan MAK is equipped with a A-190 100mm artillery system and a naval variant of the Grad-M 122mm MLRS. Perhaps the most important addition is the Buyan-M MRK, which carries up to eight Kalibr or Onyx missiles.

Although Russia is reportedly making great efforts to develop littoral systems and integrate naval systems into ground operations, thereby increasing "Brown-Water" capabilities, there are some opportunity costs. According to the 12 September 2018 edition of *Izvestiya*, Russia's emphasis on ground support and smaller platforms is inhibiting the Russian Navy's "Blue-Water" ambitions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Inclusion of the Buyan at part of RUK and ROK will increase the efficiency of employment of the fleet for support of ground troops in littoral theaters and, specifically, at amphibious assault landings.”



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Serpukhov.corvette.Project 21631.Buyan-M.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/NAVY-Day-2018-Saint-Petersburg/i-8zQSJn8, CC 4.0>.

When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>

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Continued: Increasing Russia's "Brown-Water" Navy

Source: Nikolay Surkov and Aleksey Ramm, "Ракетные «малыши» научились обеспечивать поддержку Сухопутным войскам (Little Missile Ships to Provide Support for the Ground Forces)," *Izvestiya*, 8 October 2018. <https://iz.ru/739077/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/raketnye-malyshi-nauchilis-obespechivat-podderzhku-sukhoputnym-voiskam>

Project 21630 Buyan small artillery ships (MAK) and Project 21631 Buyan-M small guided-missile ships (MRK) have been included in the integrated system of command and control. They will now at an onshore request engage the adversary with fire of artillery guns and missiles. Thanks to the latest modifications, these ships will be able in real time to obtain information from the Ground Troops and drones and strike them and there. This will make these assault platforms capable of operating in a close coupling with ground troops.

Izvestiya was told in the Navy Main Command that the Project 21630 MAK and Project 21631 MRK will be included in so-called reconnaissance-strike and reconnaissance-fire loops (RUK and ROK). This decision was made at the outcome of five-day exercises of the Caspian Flotilla in April. The ships practiced fire from artillery guns at ground targets and also struck with Kalibr and Oniks missiles here.

These ships will as part of RUK and ROK obtain information on targets in real time from drones and from gunners at the forward edge. The strikes will be delivered at an onshore request – the information is transmitted via the reconnaissance, command and control, and communications system (KRUS). It is sufficient for the warrior to note the target on a special tablet to summon artillery fire or a missile strike...

Inclusion of the Buyan at part of RUK and ROK will increase the efficiency of employment of the fleet for support of ground troops in littoral theaters and, specifically, at amphibious assault landings, independent naval expert Aleksandr Mozgovoy believes.

"Extensive employment of the fleet for support of the Ground Troops is characteristic of the Caspian since there has been and is now no worthwhile naval adversary there," the expert explained. "The Buyan was initially built as a gunboat. It was built for shore operations. Modern missile arms have given the gunboat a 'long arm'. The Buyan-M corvettes may through the employment of Kalibrs strike at a large part of the Near East, which they demonstrated during the strikes against the terrorists in Syria..."

Source: Илья Крамник, "Поближе к берегу: как изменится состав ВМФ России (Closer to Shore: How the Composition of the Russian Navy Will Change)," *Izvestiya*, 12 September 2018. <https://iz.ru/787950/ilia-kramnik/poblizhe-k-beregu-kak-izmenitsia-sostav-vmf-rossii>

The parameters of the new state armaments program, including the section on the Navy, are as yet unclear but current trends in military shipbuilding allow us to draw certain conclusions. The proportion of deep-sea and oceangoing surface ships in the Russian Navy could be greatly reduced in the next 10 years...

A Politically and Economically Motivated Trifle

The sharp shift in military shipbuilding priorities began after the events of 2014 and was prompted by both political and economic considerations. The political rupture with Ukraine and end of the long-established pooling of shipbuilding resources badly dislocated the construction schedules for the Project 11356 and Project 22350 frigates and also made it harder to maintain a number of Soviet-era ships. The need to reduce defense spending and issues bringing several of the latest systems to maturity also had an adverse impact on the rate of implementing new projects.

A solution was found in building more of the simpler and cheaper vessels, such as for example the Project 22160 patrol ships (corvettes) and the Project 21631 and 22800 small missile ships...

The need to build two different types of small missile ship is also due to a desire to remedy the main defects of Project 21631, which stands out for its poor seagoing performance and may be of limited use even in the Black and Mediterranean Seas...Thus, the group of surface ships in the main classes intended for operations in coastal and nearby seas currently comprises 73 according to the available information, and could remain as many and, possibly, increase to 80 or more by the late 2020s....

High-Ranking Problems

Renewal of the group of deep-sea and oceangoing ships is the main problem facing the Russian Navy today. Iz.ru has already looked at the prospects for building aircraft-carrying ships and renewing the fleet's amphibious assault forces, but the state of affairs with the group of nonaircraft-carrying category 1 and 2 ships, which should ensure that the Navy can perform most of its duties, is now critical. Repeated postponements of the construction of new destroyers and major changes to the frigate building program risk undermining the fleet's ability to accomplish its tasks away from our shores...

The creeping reduction of the group of major surface ships is made more dangerous by the quite lengthy time needed to build them. On top of that, the already small projected number of these ships for 2028 could shrink further if construction of the new-generation destroyers is again postponed or, equally, if the upgrade program for the fleet's existing frigates is cut back.

This situation increases both the workload for the group of coastal waters ships and the importance of the frigate construction program. The most realistic solution seems to be to continue building the relatively inexpensive Project 20380 ships, which two yards can do at present, and building as many as possible Project 22350M frigates. If properly financed, it will be possible to build 12-14 multirole missile ships in the coming 10 years and compensate for the retirement of the Soviet-era ships.