



## New Amphibious Warfare Ships...Someday

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Navy has worn out its large amphibious warfare ships in supporting the Syrian government. They have been pulled out of the fleets, used continuously and then quickly refitted and returned to the fleets. The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* notes how they were in need of replacement long before the demands of the “Syrian Express” and clearly need to be replaced now, but there are more pressing demands on the defense Ruble. The design bureaus are going ahead and developing plans for an amphibious landing helicopter dock and a new amphibious assault ship. These will have to fit into the concept of over-the-horizon amphibious assault as well as more traditional amphibious operations. Apparently, they will also have to wait their turn. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**Source:** Ilya Kramnik, “Уйти за горизонт (Going over the Horizon),” *Izvestia*, 9 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/764634/ilia-kramnik/uiti-za-gorizont>

*Previous reports on the planned construction of new helicopter carriers for the Russian Navy reflected the Navy's desire to obtain a landing helicopter dock along the lines of the Netherlands' Rotterdam class, and amphibious assault ships similar or superior...to the French Mistral class, whose construction for the Russian Navy was thwarted in 2014.*

*A key difference ...involves a fundamentally different concept of amphibious assault operations. The large amphibious warfare ships currently in service with the Russian Federation Navy, whose architecture harkens back to the tank carriers of World War II, primarily envisage amphibious landings directly onto the shore using ramps. In rare cases, amphibious landings used floating armor in direct proximity to the shoreline.*

*Assault ships directly supported the amphibious ground force with their own weaponry -- guns and multiple launch rockets. In the event of an encounter with a strong enemy, ships of this class run the risk of becoming one-time-use vessels – an excellent target...lying in shallow water directly beside a beach...*

*The key difference of the new concept is over-the-horizon amphibious assault, which does not presuppose an assault ship approaching within visual contact of shore. Naval infantry lands by sea (using...landing cutters carried in the well deck of a landing helicopter dock or amphibious assault ship) or by helicopter. Shallow-draft cutters, air cushion vehicles and helicopters sharply increase the number of areas accessible to an amphibious assault compared to the classic “ramp-based” large amphibious warfare ships, which require a relatively level beach and a level seabed by the shore.*

*Over-the-horizon amphibious assault landings accelerate the process and a large proportion of the assault landing can be ashore half an hour after the amphibious assault ship/landing helicopter dock has taken up position out of sight of shore. The helicopters, cutters and landing force provide the direct fire support...*

*The Russian Navy currently has 15 Project 775 large amphibious warfare ships -- which were built in Poland...during the mid-seventies and the early nineties -- and four Project 1171 ships built in the USSR in the sixties. Within the framework of possible local conflicts close to Russian borders, there could be a continuing need for such vessels. However, carrying out long-distance missions from our own shores requires entirely different ships able to not only deliver ... men and materiel to a requisite spot, but also to ensure long-term support, including with air support...*

*The optimum composition of amphibious assault forces...could ideally include eight classic large amphibious warfare ships -- both new builds and refitted Soviet vessels -- and six to eight new-type vessels, including four landing helicopter docks and two or four amphibious assault ships. At the same time, this kind of amphibious assault grouping will require for its own support a corresponding number of long-range maritime and oceangoing warships, whose series production for the Russian Navy is proceeding with great difficulty...*

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Project 775 Ropucha-I class russian tank landing ship Yamal. The Black sea, Sevastopol bay (2009).  
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