



Reasons for Caspian Flotilla Headquarters Relocation

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Sputnik* gives some vague reasoning behind Russia's recent decision to move the Caspian Flotilla headquarters from Astrakhan to the town of Kaspiysk in the Republic of Dagestan. The Black Sea Fleet's former commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov stated that the move was simply "strategically correct." The move has garnered little attention in the Russian mass media, but has been of significant interest in the other Caspian littoral states. The accompanying excerpted article from *AzerNews*, a newspaper in Azerbaijan, gives a bit more of an explanation for the move. Generally, there is little belief that the move was made to influence or deter other Caspian littoral states, or for internal security purposes, as Dagestan is probably the most volatile area in Russia. The consensus of thought appears to believe that the relocation is being done for practical reasons. The Volga River is growing shallower and the Volga Delta and the northern part of the Caspian Sea can freeze over in winter. In addition, the Kaspiysk location is closer to waters needed for launching Kalibr-NK missiles into certain locations in the Middle East, as the Caspian Flotilla launched Kalibr-NKs into Syria in 2015. By some estimates, the move could save the flotilla 12 hours. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: Admiral Explains Why Russia Moving Caspian Flotilla HQ to Dagestan," *Sputnik*, 3 April 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/military/201804031063158439-admiral-flotilla-relocation/>

Russia is preparing a new base for its Caspian Flotilla, which is set to become of the country's most technically advanced naval facilities. The Black Sea Fleet's former commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov, welcomes the decision to relocate the Caspian Flotilla headquarters from Astrakhan to Kaspiysk in Dagestan as "strategically correct." ... "From a strategic standpoint, all the neighboring countries are our good friends. Secondly, we are just moving the command and control headquarters there," Komoyedov said...

A source familiar with matter told Sputnik that the transfer is slated for next year, but added that changes to the schedule were possible depending on funding. The Caspian Flotilla is the maritime element of the Southern Military District, which is stationed in Astrakhan and ensures Russian national interests in the Caspian Sea region by carrying out antiterrorist activities, providing safety of trade, protecting national interests in the area of oil fields. The flotilla consists of several brigades and divisions of surface ships and units of coastal troops...

The Caspian Flotilla is also a strong factor in ensuring Russia's leadership on the world's largest landlocked sea where littoral states have been engaged in a 15-year-old tug-of-war over the sea's oil and bio resources. The Caspian Flotilla gained prominence in Russia's strategic vision when it carried out a series of cruise missile strikes at terrorist positions in Syria in October 2015.

Source: Azer Ahmadbayli, "Why move Caspian flotilla to Middle Eastern theater?" *AzerNews*, 6 April 2018. <https://www.azernews.az/analysis/129908.html>

So, why move?

All of the [Caspian littoral] states have good relations with Russia, so Russia's rivalry with coastal countries is not the reason. The Caspian Sea is an enclosed body of water, so a possible clash with warships of third parties may also be excluded. Also, the transfer of the naval base from Astrakhan to Kaspiysk is quite costly... Then why has the decision been made? Let's take a look at some possible reasons.

Strike task factor

Growing tensions in the Middle East can one day lead to armed clashes or full-scale war, which is harmful for Russia's national interests. So Russia is taking preventive measures, if it happens. The flotilla will be relocated closer to the Middle East theater of operation strengthening Russia's striking capacity from the North and winning time for deployment.

Internal security factor

Stability in the North Caucasus is of critical importance to Russia... Dagestan, like the entire North Caucasus, is likely the most sensitive region of Russia... Therefore, the presence of the naval base will be an additional stabilizing factor, not only with regards to the ongoing developments in Dagestan, but in general. Some military experts consider this reason to be totally groundless, where some others say it makes sense...

“The Black Sea Fleet's former commander, Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov, welcomes the decision to relocate the Caspian Flotilla headquarters from Astrakhan to Kaspiysk in Dagestan as 'strategically correct'.”



Caspian Flotilla at parade in Astrakhan in 2012 (Dagestan).

Source: By Vissarion [Public domain], from Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/Caspian_Flotilla_Parade.jpg.