



# Russia to Deploy Additional Anti-Ship Missile Batteries Near Japan by 2020

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to the accompanying excerpted article, Russian defense plans indicate that more anti-ship “Bastion” and “Bal” missiles will be deployed to the Kuril Islands, a disputed area between Russia and Japan. While Bastion missiles were previously deployed to Etorofu and Kunashiri in 2016, the plan expands the number of islands with anti-ship missiles to six.

Deploying the anti-ship missiles helps ensure the security of the Sea of Okhotsk, one of Russia’s two strategic “bastions” for its nuclear-missile equipped submarines, by ensuring that any enemy anti-submarine warfare ships would come under threat. A notional deployment of these systems on the largest and most habitable islands and Kamchatka (see map) would provide adequate coverage of the Kuril island chain and the straits leading into the Sea of Okhotsk.

Japan has purchased Aegis-ashore anti-missile systems and F-35 fighter jets from the United States and is modernizing its legacy fighter fleet to be capable of using modern long-range cruise missiles. Greater US presence in the Indo-Pacific area of operations—combined with a modernizing Japanese Self Defense Forces, may mean that concern for the continuing security of its bastions is a consideration behind the deployments.

However, an important background to this development is the improvement in Russo-Japanese relations. After World War II, the Soviet Union seized two islands in southern Kuril Islands. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have been in talks to resolve the territorial dispute and are expected to meet later in January. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



(continued)





## Continued: Russia to Deploy Additional Anti-Ship Missile Batteries Near Japan by 2020

*“Experts say the increasing military importance of the two islands will make their return to Japan even more difficult.”*

**Source:** “Russia eyes missile defense buildup on disputed isles near Hokkaido,” *Kyodo*, 30 December 2018. [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/?post\\_type=news&p=1668692](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/?post_type=news&p=1668692)

*Moscow is planning to boost its missile defense capabilities, including on disputed isles off Hokkaido, by 2020, an internal Russian government document showed Sunday, in a move likely to hurt the two nations’ efforts to step up talks on concluding a postwar peace treaty.*

*The plan indicates Russia places strategic importance on the islands in defending the Sea of Okhotsk and its nuclear force stronghold as well as countering the increasing U.S. military presence in the area to address a threat by North Korea.*

*Japan and Russia are looking to push ahead with peace treaty talks as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed in November to accelerate negotiations.*

*A Russian government source said the document obtained by Kyodo News was drawn up sometime after this summer. It remains unknown whether the plan was approved by Putin. Russian media recently reported on the envisioned military buildup in the area...*

*According to the document, new shore-to-ship missiles systems called the Bastion, with a range of more than 300 kilometers (over 180 miles), and the Bal, with a range of over 130 km (over 80 miles), will be deployed on six islands and on the Kamchatka Peninsula.*

*Missile systems were deployed in 2016 on Etorofu and Kunashiri, two of the four islands and islets off Hokkaido that are claimed by Japan.*

*The two islands, along with Shikotan and the Habomai islet group, are called the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kurils in Russia. The former Soviet Union seized them following Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II in 1945.*

*Part of Hokkaido and the disputed islands will fall within the range of the missile defense systems.*

*According to the plan, missiles will not be deployed on Shikotan or the Habomai islets, whose return by the then-Soviet Union was mentioned in a 1956 declaration. Abe and Putin agreed in a meeting in November to advance negotiations on a peace treaty based on the declaration...*

*Russia has constructed four barracks for troops on Etorofu and Kunashiri, triggering a protest from Japan earlier this month. Experts say the increasing military importance of the two islands will make their return to Japan even more difficult.*

*Moscow has also expressed concern over Tokyo’s plan to deploy the U.S.-developed Aegis Ashore missile defense system, saying it will be difficult to conclude a peace treaty unless Japan explains its future security policy.*



In foreground two models of 3K55 Bastion, in background three models of 3K60 Bal, Army 2018.

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