



Pacific Fleet Strategic Nuclear Augmentation

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying passage from *Izvestia* reports, the Borei class (also called the Dolgorukii class) nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine is replacing the Typhoon and Delta class submarines of the Russian Navy. Significantly, Russia is moving to balance their naval nuclear strike force between the Northern and Pacific Fleet. The underpopulated Eastern Military District has fewer combat forces than those to the West. This move is part of Russia's gradual reinforcement of the eastern periphery as well as providing a higher degree of survivability for its naval nuclear strike force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Russia is building up its strategic nuclear forces in the east. The shipbuilders will soon be handing over the Project 955A Borei-class missile submarine cruiser Knyaz Oleg [Prince Oleg] to the Pacific Fleet. The new boat will be based in Kamchatka.”

Source: Aleksei Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoy, “«Князь» моря сего: новый подводный крейсер пополнит Тихоокеанский флот (Prince of This Sea: Submarine Cruiser Will Augment Pacific Fleet),” *Izvestia*, 3 September 2019. <https://iz.ru/914852/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/kniaz-moria-sego-novyi-podvodnyi-kreiser-popolnit-tikhookeanskii-flot>

Prince of This Sea: Submarine Cruiser Will Augment Pacific Fleet

It was originally destined for the Northern Fleet, but there was a change to the Defense Ministry's plans. A Pacific Fleet crew for the submarine has already been raised, and this has been dispatched to Severodvinsk to take over the boat from the shipbuilders....

The series of fourth-generation Borei- and Borei-A-class missile platforms will provide the basis of Russia's sea-based Strategic Nuclear Forces. In line with the State Armaments Program, there are plans to build 10 of these submarines for the navy. Three of them -- the Yuriy Dolgorukii, Aleksandr Nevskii, and Vladimir Monomakh -- have already been commissioned in the navy. The first submarine cruiser was assigned to the Northern Fleet, while the other two were assigned to the Pacific Fleet. It is anticipated that the fourth submarine -- the Knyaz Vladimir -- will join the Northern Fleet this year. Under the terms of the contract, the submarine Knyaz Oleg is to be handed over to the fleet in 2020. Consequently, the Pacific Fleet will possess three of the newest Boreis and the Project 667BDR Kalmar-class missile cruiser Ryazan, which was redeployed from the Northern Fleet in 2008.

Military expert Dmitriy Boltenev believes that the two fleets will each acquire five of the latest submarine missile cruisers. “The Borei-class boats are the most modern strategic submarine cruisers in the Russian navy. We are ahead of America in the construction of fourth-generation submarines. The Columbia-class (the USS Columbia) nuclear submarines are now only being developed. They are not expected to enter service with the US Navy for several years.”

Inevitable Retaliation

Captain 1st Rank (Reserve) Igor Kurdin, Chairman of the Submariners' Club of Saint Petersburg, believes that the Boreis will be able to operate successfully in both the Northern and Pacific theaters. “The USSR attempted to divide the strategic nuclear missile platforms equally between the Northern and Pacific Fleets. They were responsible for delivering a retaliatory strike in the event of an attack on our country...The situation changed following the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Northern Fleet retained its strategic missile submarine cruiser grouping in the 1990s, with some losses, while the Pacific Fleet was left with only one such cruiser -- the Georgiy Pobedonosets, built back in the 1980s. Since then the Pacific Fleet has lagged behind the Northern Fleet in numbers of submarine cruisers. So the reinforcement of the Strategic Nuclear Forces in the country's east is long overdue.”

“It is strategically important to maintain a formidable ‘missile strike force’ in the Pacific. The nuclear submarine base in the Kamchatka city of Vilyuchinsk has always been valued by submariners for its geographic location. On leaving the base, a submarine immediately finds itself in the ocean, which enables it to move to its alert site or combat patrol area undetected and in safety. Northern Fleet submarines exiting the bases at Gadzhiyevo or Severodvinsk are faced with a lengthy passage through the Barents Sea, which restricts their maneuver and makes them more predictable and vulnerable.”

“It is importance that the missile flying time to a potential adversary from the Kamchatka area is considerably less than for those launched from the Barents Sea. These characteristics make a retaliatory strike mounted by a Pacific Fleet ship more dangerous for the enemy.”

The Boreis carry on board up to 16 R-30 Bulava-30 solid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missiles with an operating radius of over 9,000 kilometers. Each of these is fitted with 150-kiloton warhead-armed reentry vehicles. Thus, a single full salvo delivered by a Borei-A submarine can wipe several dozen important targets from the face of the Earth -- from military or naval bases to entire cities....

The Ministry of Defense is now actively strengthening the defense of the Arctic and the Far East. Particular attention is being paid to Kamchatka, where the main base of the strategic missile platforms, Vilyuchinsk, is located. The Northern Sea Route will soon be patrolled by modern Su-34 bombers. Their inventory includes Kh-35U anti-ship missiles, which can send a large enemy combatant to the bottom. Preparations are underway on Kamchatka to deploy MiG-31 interceptors to provide cover for the Northern Strategic Sector.

Maneuver detachments of Bastion coastal defense missile systems are being established in the Arctic. These groups, reinforced with naval infantry, can conduct autonomous patrols of uninhabited northern territories for several months at a stretch. The Bastion's technical capabilities enable it to securely defend a stretch of coastline hundreds of kilometers long against an enemy landing force. Anti-ship missiles can be deployed in a matter of minutes. The first such detachments have already been constituted within the Pacific Fleet coastal defense troops.