



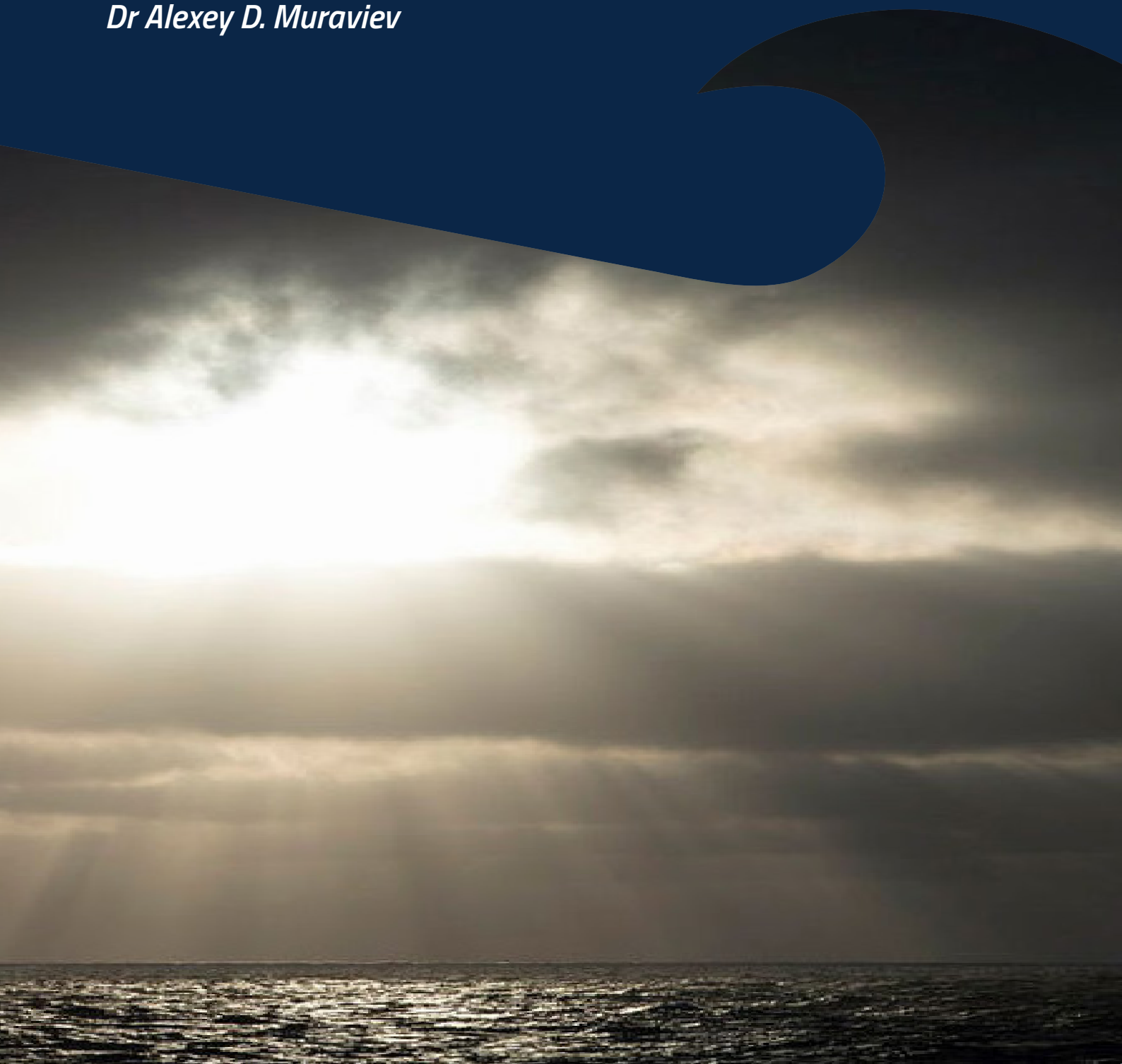
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Battle Reading the Russian Pacific Fleet 2023-2030

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Cover image

Photo by ABIS Richard Cordell - Exercise Ocean Explorer 17.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AD	air defence
AF/AD	air force/air defence
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
AUV	autonomous underwater vehicle
Bde	brigade
CGHG	guided-missile cruiser
CN-RFN	Commander in Chief of the Russian Federation Navy
DDGHM	guided-missile destroyer
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FFGHM	guided-missile frigate
FSGM	guided-missile corvette
HQ	headquarters
LHD	helicopter landing dock
LST	landing ship tank
MCC	mine warfare ships
MD	military district
MD-15/-22	Maritime Doctrine of 2015/2022
MG-PAC	Maritime Guards of the Russian Border Guard Service in the Pacific
MoD	Ministry of Defence
PFNA	Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy

PRIMFLOT	Primorskaya Flotilla
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
Regt	regiment
RFN	Russian Federation Navy
RFS	Russian Federation Ship
RUSNOR	Russian Northern Fleet
RUSPAC	Russian Pacific Fleet
RUSPAC-COMM	Commander of the Russian Pacific Fleet
SFC-RUSPAC	Submarine Forces Command of the Pacific Fleet
SLBM	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SLOC	sea lines of communication
SBCM	sea-based cruise missile
SOVPAC	Soviet Pacific Fleet
SSBN	nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine
SSGN	nuclear-powered submarine armed with cruise missiles
SSK	diesel-electric attack submarine
SSM	surface to surface missile
SSN	nuclear-powered attack submarine
UCTFN-RF	United Command of Troops and Forces in the Northeast of the Russian Federation
US	United States
USN	United States Navy

Battle Reading the Russian Pacific Fleet 2023–2030

On 21 May 2023, the Red Banner Russian Pacific Fleet (RUSPAC) marked its 292nd anniversary. Russian naval presence in the Pacific maritime theatre dates back to 1731, when the country formally established its first naval footprint on the shores of the Pacific Ocean.¹

RUSPAC remains the least analysed and assessed Russian naval fleet. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, there was a continuous decline in interest of developments in the Russian navy. This led many to conclude that Russia has lost its power projection capability in the Indo-Pacific.

Over the past two decades, there has been a gradual reanimation of Russian naval power in the Pacific. This has occurred in the context of the intensification of the RUSPAC operational activity, including out-of-area deployments. This ongoing process of force modernisation has occurred against the backdrop of escalating strategic rivalry between Russia and the United States of America (US), as well as Washington's European and the Indo-Pacific allies, including Australia.

This paper will critically review major trends in RUSPAC force modernisation, its qualitative transformation, operational activities and engagement with foreign navies, with a particular focus on China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). This study concludes with a reflection on potential implications for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and allied navies in the Indo-Pacific.

RUSPAC Order of Battle

The Russian Federation Navy (RFN) operates two open-ocean fleets: the Russian Northern Fleet (RUSNOR) and the Russian Pacific Fleet (RUSPAC). The latter has the largest operational area of responsibility, stretching across the entire Pacific Ocean and parts of the Indian Ocean maritime theatre (to Sri Lanka), and from the eastern sector of the Arctic Ocean down to the Southern Ocean. Russia's military-organisational hierarchy describes the RUSPAC as an operational-strategic grouping (*operativno-strategicheskoe ob'edinenie*)—a military-organisational entity responsible for operations at a theatre-level and above.

Currently, the fleet's forces are split into two groupings:

- operational (theatre) level: the Primorskaya Flotilla (PRIMFLOT) and the Submarine Forces Command of the Pacific Fleet (*Kommandovanie Podvodnykh Sil Tikhookeanskogo Flota*) or SFC-RUSPAC
- operational-territorial (regional) level: the United Command of Troops and Forces in the Northeast of the Russian Federation (*Ob'edinennoe Kommandovanie Voisk and Sil na Severovostoke RF*) or UCTFN-RF.²

These principal organisational branches comprise divisions (*diviziya*), brigades (bde), battalions (*diviziony*) and detachments of ships and vessels. Some have land force/marine, or air support and air defence (AD) elements (see Appendix 1).

The RUSPAC is Russia's second potent naval fleet in terms of its combat firepower and warfighting potential, following the RUSNOR. As of September 2023, RUSPAC operates over 260 units, among them nearly 90 warships with a total combined displacement of over 610,000 tonnes (see Table 1). RUSPAC's estimated peacetime strength is about 30,000 active personnel.

RUSPAC's Submarine Forces Command (SFC-RUSPAC—the fleet's major strike element) operates 24 multi-role nuclear-powered and conventional (diesel-electric) boats with a total approximate displacement of 189,000 tonnes (surfaced). The SFC-RUSPAC unites elements of the former 16th submarine squadron (*eskadra*) homeported in Viliuchinsk (Kamchatka Peninsula)³ and the 19th (conventional) submarine brigade of the PRIMFLOT, which is homeported in Vladivostok (see Appendix 1).

RUSPAC's surface arm consists of 65 warships, about 20 per cent of which are ocean-going combatants capable of supporting out-of-area operations. Operational units include the RUSPAC's flagship Moskva-class guided-missile cruiser (CGHG) RFS *Varyag*, three Udaloy-class guided-missile destroyers (DDGHMs), and five new Project 20380/20385 light (2nd Rank) guided missile frigates (FFGHMs).⁴ All major surface units are assigned to either the 36th division of surface ships (RFS *Varyag*, Udaloy, and Project 20380s) of the PRIMFLOT or the 114th brigade of coastal combatants (projects 20385 and 12700) of the UCTFN-RF.

The Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation (PFNA) is RUSPAC's air arm, which comprises several regiments (9 to 10 squadrons) and operates 107 fixed-wing and rotary aircrafts (see Table 1). RUSPAC's aerial and air defence operations are heavily dependent on support by elements of the 11th Air Force/Air Defence (AF/AD) Army of the Eastern Military District (MD), and the Long-Range Aviation (LRA, Russia's strategic bomber force).⁵

RUSPAC's amphibious arm comprises two naval infantry (marines) brigades supported by the 100th brigade of amphibious ships assigned to the PRIMFLOT. Russia's coastal defence element has three missile brigades, one regiment (regt), and the newly formed headquarters of the future coastal defence division (see Table 1).

Additionally, the Maritime Guard element of the Russian Border Guard Service in the Pacific (MG-PAC) operates 77 armed surface platforms, including corvettes, and armed craft capable of performing limited combat missions in wartime.⁶

Table 1: RUSPAC order of battle and major formations at September 2023

Fleet			
Equipment, by type			
Submarines	Strategic	5 total	
		SSBN	4
		SSAN	1
	Sub-strategic and tactical	19 total	
		SSGN	4 (2 in refit)
		SSN	3 (2 in refit)
		SSK	8
Major surface combatants	10 (2) total		
	CGHG	1	
	DDGHM	3 (1 in refit; 2 in reserve)	
	FFGHM	5	
Patrol and coastal combatants	34 total		
	FSGM	4	
	FSM	8	
	PCFG	11	

	PB	11
Mine warfare	12 total	
	MCC	3
	MSO	2
	MSC	7
Amphibious	9 total	
	LST	4
	LCM	5
Naval Aviation		
Forces, by role		
Fighters	1-2 squadrons with MiG-31BS/BM Foxhound A/C	
ASW	3 squadrons with Ka-27/Ka-29 Helix	
	2 squadrons with Il-38 May, Il-38N Novella; Il-18D; Il-22 Coot B	
	1 squadron with Tu-142MK/MZ/MR Bear F/J	
Transport	2 squadrons with An-140-100, An-12BK Cub; An-26 Curl; Tu-134	
Equipment, by type		
Aircraft	FTR	12 MiG-31BS/BM Foxhound A/C
	ASW/MP	24 total
		11 Tu-142M3 Bear F/J; 8 Il-38 May and 4 Il-38N Novella; 1 Il-22 Coot B
	EW * ELINT	1 Il-22 Coot B

	TPT	7 total 1 An-140-100, 2 An-12BK Cub; 3 An-26 Curl; 1 Tu-134
Helicopters	64 total	
	ASW	29 Ka-27/Ka-27M Helix
	TPT – medium	8 Ka-29/Ka-29M Helix; 26 Mi-8/Mi-8 AMTSh Hip, 1 Mi-8AMTSh-VA
Naval Infantry		
Forces, by role		
Manoeuvre	Mechanised	2 naval infantry brigades (155th and 40th)
Air defence	53rd AD division (1 SAM regt (1532nd), 1 EW regt)	
Coastal artillery and missile troops		
Forces, by role		
Coastal defence	1 div HQ, 1 regt (50th), 3 AShM brigades (72nd, 75th and 520th)	
Combat Support		
Engineering support	1 engr regt	
Electronic warfare/countermeasures	1 EW centre	

RUSPAC Tasks, Missions and Priorities

Despite being considerably smaller and less potent than the Soviet Pacific Fleet (SOVPAC), the fleet's range of peacetime missions remains extensive. Maintaining a combat ready, sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent, and partaking in strategic deterrent operations, is RUSPAC's principal priority. Other missions include:

- conventional maritime defence of the Russian Far East and the eastern sector of the Arctic Ocean
- creating a favourable maritime regime in coastal waters and littoral seas, and securing Russia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)
- protecting friendly merchant shipping and key sea lines of communications (SLOC)
- forward presence and naval diplomacy
- supporting peacekeeping operations sanctioned by the United Nations
- special operations to counter piracy, maritime crime and terrorism at sea.

In wartime, the RUSPAC is likely to prioritise two principal missions: naval strategic warfare (support of friendly nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) operations) and the maritime defence of eastern Russia. Depending on significance, these missions can be divided into three levels of tasks:

- strategic tasks: defence of the Okhotsk SSBN bastion and strategic strike; limited anti-submarine warfare (ASW); operations against enemy SSBNs
- operational (theatre) tasks: operations against enemy strike battle groups, including carrier battle groups; ASW operations against nuclear-powered guided-missile carrying (SSGN) and attack submarines (SSNs)
- tactical (local) tasks: local ASW; anti-SLOC warfare; mine warfare; coastal defence; limited amphibious operations.

The 2022 edition of Russia's Maritime Doctrine (MD-22) introduces two new classifications of different areas of the global maritime domain. These areas are differentiated by levels of importance, which are determined by their impact on Russia's economy, influence on socio-economic activity, and national security and defence interests. The two categories are: vital regions/zones (*zhiznenno-vazhnye raiony/zony*) and important regions/zones (*vazhnye raiony/zony*).

With respect to the Indo-Pacific geostrategic realities, the MD-22 identifies territorial waters, the EEZ, the Sea of Okhotsk and the Arctic Ocean as vital regions, while the Kuril Islands and key SLOC along Pacific Asia and Africa fall under the category of important regions.⁷ In terms of the latter, the RUSPAC will be mandated to conduct forward operations along with elements of Russia's other fleets in peacetime. In wartime, the defence of the Kuril Islands barrier along the Sea of Okhotsk, the Bering Sea, and the north-eastern sectors of the Sea of Japan, would become the fleet's core areas of concern. This aligns with operational plans to prioritise the defence of Russia's inner defensive perimeter (some 200 to 300 kilometres from the shoreline).⁸

The MD-22 identifies the following priorities concerning the ongoing development of Russian naval power in the Pacific Ocean:

- the development of the system of basing of the RUSPAC
- the qualitative and quantitative expansion of its principal parameters
- the creation of conditions for naval presence in the Asia-Pacific region,⁹ which would allow control over critical SLOC
- the establishment of naval logistical support bases across the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰

RUSPAC Modernisation Trends

Increasing Russian naval presence in the Asia-Pacific region is one of Russia's core priorities. In May 2021, Chief of the RFN (CN-RFN) Admiral Nikolai Evmenov, outlined future trends for RUSPAC force development. Concerning the future submarine force, Evmenov stated that the fleet would continue to receive Borey-A, Yasen'-M and Project 626.3 submarines. RUSPAC's surface arm would be replenished with projects 20380, 20385 and 22350 FFGHMs, as well as Project 22800 guided-missile corvettes (FSGM). Select units of the Udaloy-class will undergo modernisation and capability upgrades. CN-RFN emphasised that 'without a doubt the Pacific Fleet seamen would receive universal landing ships' (a reference to Project 22900 helicopter platform dock (LHD) units).¹¹

CN-RFN's statement reflects the ambition of the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the naval staff to rectify the dramatic decline of the fleet's combat strength, which occurred between 1992 and 2001. Indeed, Russia's naval modernisation plans for the RUSPAC until 2030 can be divided into four major phases: 2001 to 2010; 2010 to 2020; 2021 to 2025; 2026 to 2030.

The first phase involved focussed on de-escalation. Russian naval command managed to arrest the post-Soviet escalating decline of the fleet, force levels were stabilised and kept at a bare minimum, while funding for operational maintenance, exercise and deployment activities was standardised. The second phase was marked stabilisation. Priority was around commissioning new platforms for the future fleet and the reengagement of extensive exercise activity and regularised out-of-area deployments were resumed.

This second phase laid down the foundations for the gradual implementation of the two follow-on expansion phases, particularly with respect to the modernisation of the RUSPAC's order of battle. Between 2010 and September 2023, no less than 65 new units were commissioned, including 23 auxiliary and support vessels, 16 of which were assigned to the MG-PAC (see Table 2).¹²

Table 2: New additions to the RUSPAC, 2010 to September 2023¹³

Type of platform	Project, class, type of platform (number ordered)	Vessels/Ships	Operational (year)
Strategic nuclear deterrent arm			
Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines	2 Project 955 Borey-class	RFS <i>Aleksandr Nevskiy</i>	2013
	Displacement: 14,720/24,000 tonnes (surfaced/dived)	RFS <i>Vladimir Monomakh</i>	2014
	2 Project 955 Borey A-class	RFS <i>Knyaz' Oleg</i>	2021
	Displacement: 14,720/24,000 tonnes	RFS <i>Generalissimus Suvorov</i>	2022
Special-purpose submarines	1 Project 09852 Converted Oscar-II-class Displacement: 14,700/30,000 tonnes (est.)	RFS <i>Belgorod</i>	2022
Primary combat arm			
Multirole submarines	1 Yasen M-class SSN/SSGN Displacement: 8,600/13,800 tonnes	RFS <i>Novosibirsk</i>	2021
	4 Project 636.3 Improved Varshavyanka SSK Displacement: 2,350/3,950 tonnes	RFS <i>Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy</i> RFS <i>Volkhov</i> RFS <i>Magadan</i> RFS <i>Ufa</i>	2019 2020 2021 2022
Major surface combatants	4 Project 22380 Steregushchiy-class FFGHM Displacement: 2,220 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Sovershenny</i> RFS <i>Gromkiy</i> RFS <i>Geroi Rossiiskoi Federatsii Aldar Tsydenzhalov</i> RFS <i>Rezkiy</i>	2017 2018 2020 2023

	1 Project 22385 Gremyashchiy-class FFGHM Displacement: 2,430 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Gremyashchiy</i>	2020
Secondary combat arm			
Minor surface combatants	3 Project 12700 Georgiy Kurbatov-class MCC Displacement: 890 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Yakov Balyaev</i> RFS <i>Pyotr Il'ichev</i> RFS <i>Anatoliy Shlemov</i>	2020 2022 2022
	1 Project 21820 Diugon-class LCM Displacement: 280 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Ivan Kartsov</i>	2015
	1 Project 11770 Serna-class LCM Displacement: 100 tonnes	RFS <i>Andrei Ivanov</i> (ex D-107)	2010
	6 Project 21980 Grachenok-class PB Displacement: 139 tonnes		2013–2021
Maritime Border Guards of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation	2 Project 22100 Okean-class PCO Displacement: 3,200 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy</i> RFS <i>Anadyr'</i>	2019 2023
	6 Project 22120 Purga-class PCO Displacement: 1,276 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Kontr-Admiral Kolchin</i> RFS <i>Kontr-Admiral Dianov</i> RFS <i>Kamchatka</i> RFS <i>Zabaikalie</i> RFS <i>Taimyr</i> RFS <i>Admiral Ugriumov</i>	2010 2013 2018 2019 2020 2021

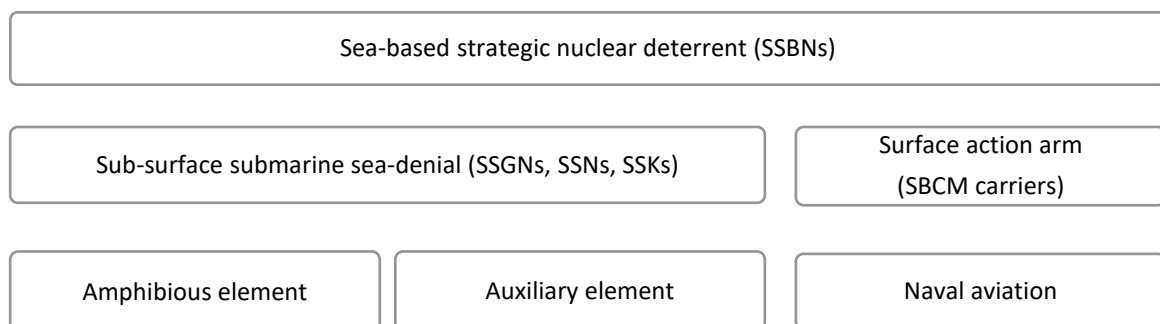
	3 Project 22460 Okhotnik-class PCO ^a Displacement: 630 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Sapfir</i> RFS <i>Korall</i> RFS <i>Dozorny</i>	2015 2015 2018
	3 Project 10410 Svetlayk-class PCC ^a Displacement: 375 tonnes (full)	PRSK-929 RFS <i>Berkut</i> PRSK-929 RFS <i>Nevel'sk</i> PRSK-929 RFS <i>Nakhodka</i>	2010 2021 2021
	2 Project 12200 Sobol-class PBF Displacement: 57 tonnes (full)		2011
Auxiliary element			
Major auxiliaries	1 Project 20180 ocean-going armaments transport Displacement: 6,300 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Akademik Kovalev</i>	2015
	1 Project 21300C ocean-going rescue ship Displacement: 5,150 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Igor Belousov</i>	2016
	1 Project 21180M diesel-electric icebreaker Displacement: 4,080 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Evpatiy Kolovrat</i>	2023
	1 Project 23470 ocean-going tug Displacement: 3,000 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Andrei Stepanov</i>	2017
	2 Project 19910/V19910 hydrographic ships	RFS <i>Viktor Faleev</i> RFS <i>Aleksandr Rogotskiy</i>	2013 2019

	Displacement: 1,227 tonnes (full)		
	1 Project 22030 ocean-going tug Displacement: 1,465 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Aleksandr Piskunov</i>	2014
Minor auxiliaries	4 Project 19920 minor hydrographic cutters Displacement: 320		2010–2021
	4 Project 02690 self-propelled floating cranes		2015–2020
	8 port tugs		2014–2015

^a Project 22460 and 10410 platforms could be fitted with 3M24 Uran anti-ship missile systems¹⁴

The current phase of the RUSPAC’s modernisation (phase three) aligns with the overall trend of positive transformation of Russia’s national naval power. The current phase of the RUSPAC’s modernisation (phase three) aligns with the overall trend of the positive transformation of Russia’s national naval power. This is the first of two expansion phases, and is based on a three-tiered approach towards force development and modernisation (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: The three-tier priority approach in Russia’s naval construction



Upgrading the sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent is deemed by Moscow to be an absolute priority, even at the expense of underfunding other naval procurement programs. Currently, SSBN force modernisation plans are based on the replacement of older-generation platforms with the Borey/Borey-A classes. By 2023, almost all ageing Delta-III

class boats were decommissioned and gradually replaced with four Borey/Borey-A class boats (see Table 2). The one remaining operational Delta-III class boat (RFS *Ryazan*) was reclassified into a multi-role submarine,¹⁵ probably after its principal missile kit was taken out of service.¹⁶ Under current confirmed plans, the RUSPAC is expected to receive six Boreys (96 SLBMs; 576–960 warheads), which is likely to reflect future Russian SSBN force levels in the Pacific.¹⁷

In the coming few years, Russia’s regional sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent component would be reinforced by a new line of strategic submarines. They include the two nuclear-powered carriers of the 2M39 Poseidon strategic nuclear torpedo system. The first specialised boat, BS-309 RFS *Belgorod*, was formally commissioned with the RUSPAC in mid-2022 but remains operational with the RUSNOR. She is expected to be transferred to the Pacific in 2024, to be followed by the purpose-built RFS *Khabarovsk* (see Table 6).

It is expected that both the RFS *Belgorod* and RFS *Khabarovsk* would be assigned to a new submarine division under the SFC-RUSPAC, along with the RFS *Akademik Makeev* and other special auxiliaries (as well as an unknown number of other submarines).¹⁸ In February and April 2023, Russian media sources published several reports concerning plans to form a third submarine division by early 2025. It is possible that this new division will also be responsible for deep-water autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) operations, such as the Vityaz’-D platform, which undertook a deep-sea exploratory dive in the Mariana Trench on 9 May 2020.¹⁹

The second tier of Russia’s force development and modernisation priorities includes multi-role nuclear and conventional submarine construction, a series of littoral and ocean-going surface strike combatants—sea-based cruise missile (SBCM)/submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) carriers such as 3M24 Uran (SS-N-25 Switchblade), 3M55 Oniks (SS-N-26 Strobile), 3M14 Kalibr-NK/PL (SS-N-30A) and 3M22 Tsirkon (SS-N-33) hypersonic systems.

Table 3: Russian warship construction programs for the RUSPAC (SBCM launchers), September 2023²⁰

Warship type	Project	Displacement, full (tonnes)	Main missile armament	Number ordered	Operational
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Submarines	Nuclear-powered	855 Yasen'-M	13,800 (dived)	8 x 5 Kalibr-PL OR 8 x 4 Oniks, Tsirkon	4+	1
	Conventional	636.3 Improved Kilo	3,950 (dived)	Kalibr-PL	6	4
Surface combatants	Ocean-going	22350/22350M Admiral Gorshkov	5,400 (22350) 8,000 (22350M)	4 x 8 3C14 Kalibr-NK, Oniks (22350)	3 (+6)	-
		20380/20385 Stereushchiy/ Gremyashchiy ^a	2,250 (20380) 2,430 (20385)	2 x 4 Uran (20380) 1 x 8 3C14 Kalibr-NK Oniks (20385)	12	5
	Littoral	22800 Karakurt	870	1 x 8 3C14 Kalibr-NK, Oniks	4 (+2)	-
Total:					29 (8)	10

^a Although Projects 20380 and 20385 were originally designed as littoral warfare combatants, commissioned units were extensively drawn in support of open-ocean long-range deployments.

As part of the multi-role submarine force upgrade, the RUSPAC is in the process of receiving two types of submarines (projects 855M and 636.3). By mid-2023, Russia's MoD ordered ten boats for the RUSPAC, five of which were commissioned, with more to be possibly laid in due course (see tables 2 and 6). Furthermore, the RFN ordered a major overhaul and refit of the RUSPAC's Oscar II-class RFS *Irkutsk* and RFS *Chelyabinsk* SSGNs, and the Akula-class RFS *Samara* SSN, to equip them with enhanced detection and SLCM strike capabilities—including increased payloads.

The surface arm expects three new types of surface action combatants (there is a confirmed order for 19 units), effectively making it Russia's largest surface warfare upgrade program since the 1980s (see Table 3). The most noticeable addition to the fleet's surface arm is the progressing construction and introduction of 12 Project 20380/20385 2nd Rank FFGHMs. Originally designed for littoral warfare, these platforms proved to be capable of staging

long-range deployments, including in the Pacific theatre. Should this ambitious plan be implemented, the RUSPAC would become the single largest operator of these types of warships in the RFN.

The littoral warfare component will be modernised, with the commissioning of the four Project 22800 FSGMs, all to be assigned to the 165th coastal ships brigade stationed in Vladivostok. The main mission of the Pacific Karakurts would be maritime interdiction operations in the Sea of Japan and along the Kuril Islands chain.²¹ It is also expected that these littoral platforms would partake in limited out-of-area deployments, possibly as far as the Yellow, East and South China seas.

Although most of the platforms under construction are smaller hull warships, the Russians are transitioning their focus on ocean-going elements. . In particular, the fleet plans to receive several advanced Project 22350 1st Rank FFGHMs.²² The variants built for the RUSPAC will carry an enhanced missile package consisting of not 16 but 24 3S14 universal missile launchers, thus becoming more potent strike platforms compared with the initial units built for the RUSNOR.²³ The first three Pacific Gorshkovs are expected to be commissioned between 2025 and 2028, about three years behind the original schedule.

The third tier includes the RUSPAC amphibious, airborne and auxiliary elements. According to Russian estimates, the RFN's amphibious and auxiliary arms capability gap is as high as 70 per cent.²⁴ Therefore, tier three is supposed to address this formidable capability gap. In particular, in the immediate future the auxiliary element will focus on the construction of a new line of support platforms equipped with Russian-built technologies.²⁵

With respect to the RUSPAC, the current emphasis is on building up ocean-going underway replenishment, support to sustain out-of-area deployments, and surveillance, intelligence gathering and tracking (see Table 6).

The amphibious element may be bolstered by the introduction of fewer but more potent platforms (landing ship tanks or LSTs and LHDs) designed for prolonged operations and overseas contingencies. The incoming Project 11711 built for the RUSPAC would come close to the Soviet Ivan Rogov class, while Project 23900 would provide the fleet with a new level capability in terms of power projection and carrier borne air power (see Table 4). These new units would replace the four ageing Project 775 (Ropucha II-class) LSTs and the only survivor of the Project 1171 (Alligator-class), RFS *Nikolai Vilkov*.

Table 4: Russian amphibious warfare construction programs for the RUSPAC, September 2023²⁶

Project type, class	Ordered	Displacement, full (tonnes)	Maximum range, n.m.	Capacity
Landing Ship Tank LST (RUSPAC)				
Project 11711 Vladimir Andreev	(2)	Up to 8,000	5,000	Up to 40 heavy equipment; up to 400 marines; 3 to 5 helicopters
Landing Helicopter Dock LHD (RUSPAC)				
Project 23900 Ivan Rogov-2	(1)	Up to 40,000	6,000	Up to 75 heavy equipment; approx. 900 marines; 16 to 20 helicopters; 4 UAVs
Landing Platform Dock LPD (SOVPAC)				
Project 1174 Ivan Rogov	2 (scrapped)	14,060	7,500	50 PT-76 MBTs OR 80 APCs OR 120 trucks; up to 500 marines; 4 Ka-29

The ambitious sealift upgrade coincides with the qualitative restructuring and the expansion of the standing marine force. The organisational restructuring of Russia's marine units commenced in 2019, also inspired by the country's first proper expeditionary campaign in Syria. The initial phase of restructuring saw the gradual expansion of standing battalions within each brigade from two to six (three marine assault, one reconnaissance, and one armour/tank), supported by sniper and uninhabited aerial vehicle companies, and other combat logistical support units.²⁷ This increased the standing peacetime strength of each of RUSPAC's naval infantry brigades to between 3,000 and 4,000 personnel (prior to the war in Ukraine).

From 2019, the RUSPAC marines were steadily reinforced with additional, modernised armour, including T-80BM main battle tanks and BTR-82 armoured personnel carriers. In 2021, marine battalions of the 155th and the 40th brigades were the first in the RFN to receive BMP-3F infantry fighting vehicles.²⁸

The Russia–Ukraine War saw active involvement of both brigades in heavy frontline fighting. Contrary to some other elite units of the Russian military, the combat performance of the RUSPAC's marines was consistently high,²⁹ though it came at a considerable human cost. At the same time, Russia's partial mobilisation of 2022 saw the growth in numbers of the Pacific marines.³⁰ In December 2022, Russia's MoD released plans to expand the RFN's naval infantry/marine capability by converting five existing brigades into full-strength divisions.³¹ Once these plans are implemented, the RUSPAC would end up with two dedicated marine divisions (up to 16,000 marines in estimated strength), which also correlates with current plans to deploy the single largest group of new-generation LSTs and LHDs to the Pacific.

Contrary to other arms affected by the ongoing RUSPAC modernisation, the situation with the fleet's air wing (PFNA) is less optimistic. The main emphasis remains on maintaining flying condition of existing platforms, combined with some targeted qualitative upgrades. Some platforms have gone through a process of reactivation after being in reserve for many years. For example, from 2020, PFNA's Ka-29 Helix multirole helicopters were brought back to full operational condition and underwent refit.³² Several Il-38 May ASW fixed-wing aircraft were refitted into the Il-38N Novella variant.

The most noticeable upgrade was the gradual expansion of the fighter-interceptor capability stationed in Kamchatka. In mid-2020, plans were announced to field a second squadron of modernised MiG-31s in the PFNA's Elizovo air base, which houses the 317th air composite regiment of naval aviation.³³ As of August 2023, it remained unclear if the second squadron was formed. However, plans to expand the MiG-31 standing force are in place, which may result in the creation of the second PFNA fighter regiment in Kamchatka.³⁴ Also, in 2021, it was reported that the Russian fighter-interceptor element in Elizovo would be reinforced with several Su-35S *Super Flanker* multirole aircraft.³⁵

The expansion of the standing fighter force in Kamchatka may indicate the ambition to implement long-standing plans of the Russian MoD to form a new AF/AD army in the region.³⁶ Yet, these plans are unlikely to eventuate until the end of the active phase of Russia's war in Ukraine.³⁷

Perhaps, the most ambitious plan to upgrade Russia's air capability in the Pacific is linked to reports that Russia's MoD was considering fielding a new heavy bomber regiment equipped with the Tu-160 Blackjack strategic aircraft, part of the 326th Heavy Bomber Division, to be based in the Amur and Irkutsk regions.³⁸ Should these plans become a reality,

Russia's capacity to engage in strategic nuclear deterrent and maritime interdiction operations over the Pacific by means of aerial attack would be considerably enhanced.

Coastal and shore-based infrastructure upgrades

In addition to modernising its primary and secondary combat arms, the RUSPAC is in the middle of upgrading its coastal and shore-based defensive and support infrastructure, including the system of basing as outlined in the MD-22.

Closing gaps in the defensive layout of the Pacific coastline, combined with the numerical buildup of missile strike capabilities of shore-based units, is another priority for Russia. Over the past ten years, it has invested considerable resources in upgrades of its coastal defence missile brigades (equipped with the 3K60 Bal and 3K55 Bastion surface-to-surface missile (SSM) systems)³⁹ and the positioning of SBCM and AD elements in the Maritime Province, Kamchatka and along the Kurils. In late 2020, Russia's MoD formed the third (75th) coastal missile brigade on Sakhalin Island and positioned one of its Bastion-equipped battalions at the strategically important Matua Island in the central Kurils.⁴⁰

The Russian military is also in the process of forming a new coastal defence division (*diviziya*) in Chukotka. According to open-source reports, the new division would be responsible for defending a large coastal area stretching from Anadyr' in the Arctic, as far as Sakhalin Island and the northern parts of the Kurils.⁴¹ Between 2021 and late 2022, a divisional headquarters was formed there, along with the 50th coastal defence regiment.⁴²

Russia is steadily investing in upgrading its system of basing in anticipation of the arrival of new platforms and the gradual expansion of RUSPAC forces. For example, the nuclear submarine base in Viliuchinsk ('Hornets' Nest') is undergoing its largest upgrade since the Soviet era. In particular, the mooring front received new multifunctional piers sufficient to accommodate up to 20 submarines—some form a 50-metre high wet dock for safe mooring of strategic submarines.⁴³ Part of the base's upgrade includes the construction of special facilities to accommodate the Poseidon submarine carriers. It is expected that the works, which started in 2019, will be finished by mid-2024. Similarly, the Elizovo air base is undergoing a major refit, including the construction of reinforced concrete aircraft shelters, and upgrades of navigational and radar equipment.⁴⁴

The RFN is also investing in reanimating the practice of mobile naval bases (*morskie mobil'nye bazy*)—temporary points of basing to support the dispersion of the fleet's forces during crisis or wartime to avoid them being massed in only a few permanent bases.⁴⁵ In 2021, a special regiment of naval engineers was formed within RUSPAC that became

responsible for setting up temporary points of basing in remote harbors and forward areas.⁴⁶

After the closure of Russia's overseas base in Cam Ranh Bay (Vietnam) back in 2002, the RUSPAC lost its last standing overseas logistical station. The MD-22 identifies the absence of overseas naval support bases as one of the risks to Russia's maritime activity and, to mitigate this risk, calls for the reestablishment of overseas naval support bases. Moscow's current and future ability to project power and sustain a forward presence in the Indo-Pacific depends on two contributing factors: sufficient ocean-going underway replenishment capability and the establishment of secure overseas naval support facilities..⁴⁷

Moscow has tried to overcome this dilemma by entering into bilateral agreements with regional partner states, which grant Russian warships and aircraft special access rights to territorial waters and port calls either on an ad hoc or more regular basis. Between 2014 and 2020, four bilateral agreements establishing these arrangements were made public: with Vietnam (2014) and Myanmar (2018) in the Pacific theatre, and with Mozambique (2018) and Sudan (2019) in the Indian Ocean theatre. In addition, at least six broader agreements on defence cooperation with partner countries within the Indo-Pacific, which include warship and aircraft visitation rights, were signed and ratified during this period.⁴⁸

In recent years, Moscow has experienced some setbacks in the Navy–Navy sphere. While intensified strategic dialogue between Russia and the Philippines under the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte resulted in the RFN calling on that country's ports for replenishment support, under Duterte's successor, Ferdinand Marcos Jr, relations between Manila and Moscow experienced a negative reset. This may indeed undermine Russia's future ability to rely on the Philippines for replenishment support.

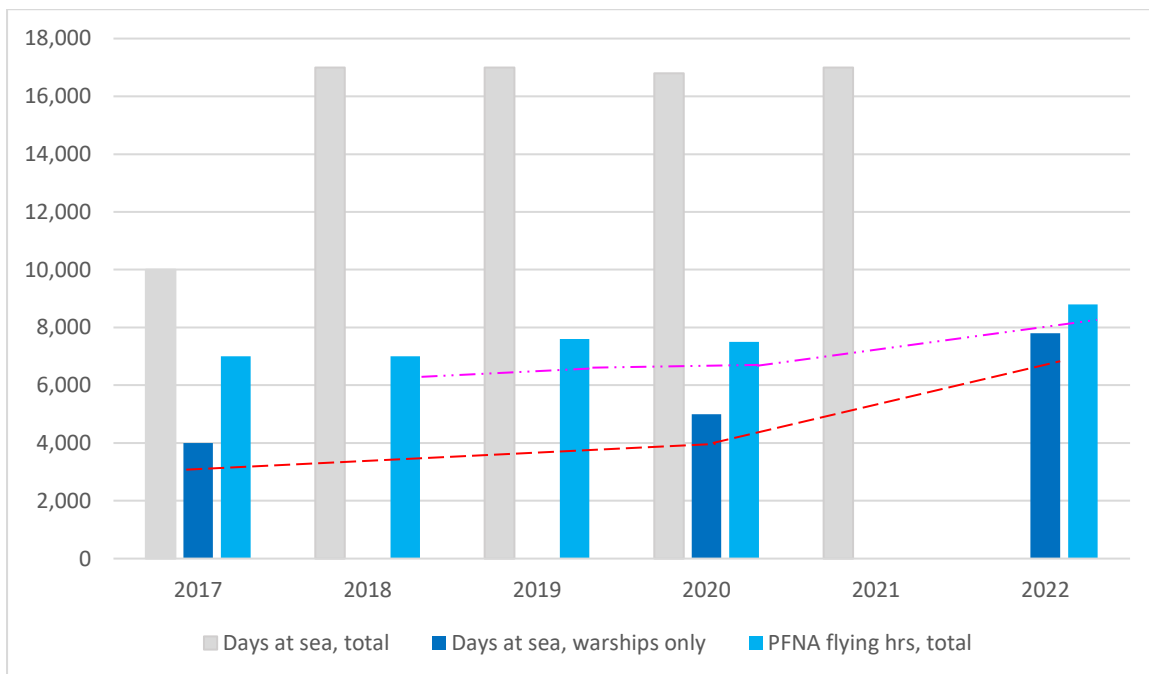
The Russian government has also reached an agreement with Sudan for the establishment of a permanent naval logistical base⁴⁹ although questions remain regarding whether or not this will be realised.⁵⁰

Within the RUSPAC's area of responsibility, Russia faces several challenges. Despite the ongoing speculation, it is doubtful that Russia will again establish a formal naval presence in Cam Ranh.⁵¹ It is more realistic to assume that an arrangement for establishing a naval support base will be reached with Myanmar, with which Moscow has developed closer defence ties. Of course, this would also depend on the future political situation in Myanmar. One way or another the Russians will continue to explore ways of re-establishing their regional foothold in the near to medium term.

Trends in the RUSPAC Operational and Exercise Activity

The RUSPAC resumed out-of-area deployments within its operational area of responsibility in the early 2000s. By 2010, these activities were regularised, with the fleet committing two to three surface task groups to annual out-of-area tours of duty in addition to submarine and surface intelligence gathering operations.⁵² Separate to these activities, the Russians intensified hydrographic and special-task expeditions across the Pacific and Indian oceans and adjacent maritime areas. Between 2014 and early 2023, they undertook at least 21 reported expeditions to update their mapping data, and to undertake surveys and other activities in areas of current and future operations (see Appendix 2).⁵³

Chart 2: RUSPAC's operational activity (reported annual days at sea and flying hours), 2017 to 2022 training years/circles⁵⁴



The intensification of operational and exercise activity resulted in the gradual increase of ship days at sea and flying hours for the RUSPAC's assets, a pattern that is illustrated by reported data (see Chart 2). According to the RUSPAC's Chief of Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Sergei Rekish, the combined deployment time at sea during the 2022 training year exceeded the 2021 parameters by 49 per cent.⁵⁵ Another important indicator of the RUSPAC's increased combat potential is its continuous recognition as the best combat-ready naval fleet in the navy.⁵⁶

The intent to maintain high levels of training and combat preparedness was highlighted by the number of exercises that were carried out under the direct command of the CN-RFN and the RUSPAC-COMM over the past three years (five and three respectively; see Table 5).

Table 5: RUSPAC's major reported exercise and other combat training activity, 2020 to September 2023⁵⁷

Date	Type of activity	Area(s)	Forces involved
2023			
Mid to late September	The Finval-2023 littoral maritime defence exercise	Sea of Chukchi, Bering Sea, Chukotka peninsula	Over 50 warships, PFNA aircraft and land-based equipment; approximately 10,000 personnel
5–20 June	Multirole exercise in forward areas	Seas of Japan and Okhotsk	Over 60 warships and auxiliaries; some 35 PFNA aircraft; coastal defence units; over 11,000 personnel
14–20 April	The fleet's wide strategic snap check-up	Bering Sea and seas of Japan and Okhotsk	167 warships (12 submarines) and auxiliaries; 89 aircraft (PFNA and the 326th bomber div); naval infantry; over 25,000 personnel
2022			
September	The Umka strategic nuclear exercise	Eastern Arctic Ocean; Chukchi Sea	Oscar-II-class RFS <i>Omsk</i> SSGN; Yasen'-M-class RFS <i>Novosibirsk</i> SSGN; Kilo class RFS <i>Magadan</i> SSK; Bastion SSMs
1–7 September	The Vostok-2022 strategic exercise	Seas of Japan and Okhotsk	Approximately 60 warships and auxiliaries; 140 aircraft; 2 DDGs; 1 auxiliary (PLAN)
3–10 June	Interdiction exercise in forward areas	Western Pacific Ocean; East China and the Philippine seas	Over 40 warships and auxiliaries; approximately 20 PFNA aircraft

Early 2022	Defence of the Northern Sea Route	Eastern Arctic Ocean	Oscar-II class SSGNs
Early–mid-February	Littoral defence exercises	Seas of Japan and Okhotsk	Approximately 20 warships and auxiliaries; PFNA aircraft
2021			
21 December	RUSPAC's first live firing of the Kalibr-PL	Sea of Japan	Kilo-class RFS <i>Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy</i> and RFS <i>Volkhov</i> SSKs
Late September–mid-October	Major amphibious exercise	Maritime Province	155th and 40th bdes (over 5,000 marines; over 900 pieces of military equipment); the 100th bde of amphibious ships; warships; aircraft
Late September	Combined missile live-firing exercise	Sea of Okhotsk	Moskva-class RFS <i>Varyag</i> CG and Oscar-II-class RFS <i>Omsk</i> SSGN; 12 warships and auxiliaries; PFNA aircraft
10–18 June	Interdiction exercise in forward areas	Central Pacific Ocean, north-west of Hawaii	Some 20 warships and auxiliaries; approximately 20 PFNA aircraft
2020			
12 December	RUSPAC's first live firing of the Bulava SLBM	Sea of Okhotsk	Borey class RFS <i>Vladimir Monomakh</i> SSBN (4 SLBMs were fired)
24 August–1 September	Part of the Ocean Shield strategic manoeuvres	Bering Sea, Chukotka peninsula, off Alaska	Some 50 warships and auxiliaries; over 40 PFNA aircraft; naval infantry

25 March– late April	Littoral defence exercises	Seas of Bering, Japan and Okhotsk	Over 30 warships and auxiliaries; PFNA aircraft; elements of the 326th bomber division
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Exercises carried out under the direct command of the CN-RFN



Exercises carried out under the direct command of the RUSPAC-COMM

Russia's naval activities in the Indo-Pacific have also expanded in line with enhanced cooperation with foreign navies. The MD-22 specifies priorities concerning naval cooperation and naval diplomacy in the Indian Ocean region. These include the development of closer partner relations with the Indian Navy (with which Russia stages regular INDRA-NAVY exercises), and several Gulf states, among them Iraq, Iran (Maritime Security Belt exercises) and Saudi Arabia.⁵⁸ In recent years, Russia has also developed operational training with the South African Navy (MOSI exercises), which also involves elements of the PLAN.

Russia's cooperation with the PLAN was underscored by the 2015 edition of the Maritime Doctrine (MD-15).⁵⁹ From 2015, the intensity, scale and the complexity of joint operational activities has been increasing. Between 2005 and September 2023, the Russian and Chinese navies took part in at least 19 confirmed bilateral and trilateral naval exercises and three joint naval patrols (see Table 5 and Appendix 3). In early July 2023, CN-RFN Evmenov was invited by his Chinese counterparts to participate in high-level consultations concerning the strengthening of bilateral naval cooperation.⁶⁰ The trip coincided with a visit of the RUSPAC's task group to Shanghai, Russia's first port call to the PRC since COVID-19.

The deepening relationship between Russia and China in the defence sphere is increasingly evident in the growing cooperation and coordination of the two countries' activities in the maritime domain. The hypothesis that the two navies have moved beyond commonly practiced cooperative relations is illustrated by the tactical scenarios of joint exercises, composition of joint task groups, and the undertaking of joint submarine operations. The conduct of joint naval patrols also supports this claim. Considering the pace with which the PLAN is bolstering its ocean-going capabilities and strategic reach, the deepening cooperation and coordination of the two partner navies may pose potential risks to the RAN and allied navies, which may be confronted with a new level of military-strategic competition in the waters of East Asia, particularly in the north east.⁶¹

The potential resumption of naval cooperation between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) may also pose potential risks to the Australian and allied navies. In the second half of 2023, Moscow and Pyongyang resumed high level strategic

consultations, including defence cooperation. The reanimation of the strategic dialogue was followed by visits by Russia's Minister of Defence, General Sergei Shoigu, to North Korea in late July 2023, and Kim Jong Un's second visit to Russia in September 2023. It was reported that during his visit to the DPRK, Shoigu proposed joint naval exercises, possibly involving the PLAN.⁶² Another possible avenue of naval cooperation is the RUSPAC's access to the North Korean logistical naval support infrastructure, which would allow the Russians extended reach and sustained presence around the strategically important Korean peninsula and regional SLOC.

Outlook to 2030

One of Russia's leading defence experts, Mikhail Khodaryonok, recently referred to the RUSPAC as the 'secondary fleet'.⁶³ For a long time, it remained neglected by Russia's MoD and the Kremlin, so its size and capability kept shrinking. This affected the RUSPAC ability to articulate declared tasks and missions, let alone deliver on its operational area of responsibility. However, a new trend is apparent today. On 19 April 2023, during a meeting with Shoigu, Russia's President Vladimir Putin highlighted the importance of the continuous development of Russian naval power, including the RUSPAC, despite the ongoing wartime commitments in the Ukraine:

... today the priorities for our armed forces are quite clear, primarily focusing on the Ukrainian track and everything related to protecting people in Donbass and in other new territories. Still, the objective to develop the navy, including on the Pacific theatre of operations, remains relevant. No one said that this should not be done. For this reason, I am asking you to make sure that these efforts carry on ...⁶⁴

Russia's war against Ukraine has coincided with phase three of the RUSPAC's modernisation plan (littoral expansion). The war has drawn considerable resources from all elements of the Russian armed forces, including those stationed in the country's east. Between February 2022 and August 2023, the RUSPAC's contribution was largely limited to a completed deployment of a naval task group to the Mediterranean, and the commitment of elements of both its naval infantry brigades to ground combat operations. The bulk of the fleet's capability remained in the Pacific, largely unaffected by the war, except for some delays to new commissions. For example, the RUSPAC was expecting to receive the fourth Project 12700 RFS *Lev Chernavin* MCC in late 2023, however, the unit was reassigned to the Russian Baltic Fleet,⁶⁵ perhaps triggered by the invitation to Finland to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

At the time of publication, the RUSPAC is still progressing through this third phase of the modernisation. The objectives of the Russian naval command here are clear. First, to

achieve a qualitative leap in the deployment of sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent capability (based on the mix of new-generation SSBNs and SSANs). Concerning the latter, a new special task division would become the second formation of its kind in the entire RFN.⁶⁶ For the first time in the history of Russian naval power in the Pacific, the fleet would operate a deep-water force of specialised underwater vehicles designed to accomplish strategic and sub-strategic level missions, thus placing them in the same warfighting category as the SSBN force.

Second, to establish a multi-layered combined land and sea defence barrier of Russia's Pacific maritime approaches. This barrier would comprise shore-based coastal missile defence elements supported by the AF/AD of the PFNA and the 11th Army, and via new at-sea littoral warfare capability. The creation of the 75th brigade, the headquarters of the future coastal defence division, will expand the standing marine force and air support elements in Kamchatka.

Phase three also includes arms upgrades to RUSPAC, including::

- full completion of projects 09852, 636.3, 12700, and 22800
- partial completion of projects 885M, 995-A, 20380/20385
- partial completion of the auxiliary element upgrade
- commissioning of first units under projects 11711 and 22350
- the fielding of the hypersonic strike capability (the Tsirkons) with surface and subsurface arms
- gradual phasing out of Soviet-era platforms and systems.

The ongoing modernisation would see creation of new units, as well as increase of numerical strength of RUSPAC personnel.

After 2025, Russia is expected to commence the fourth stage of the RUSPAC's modernization program - described as *expansion into the open ocean*. More emphasis will be given to the construction of ocean-going units. According to the open-source data, the fleet expects to receive at least 24 new warships (seven submarines, 17 surface combatants) and seven new major auxiliaries (Table 6). By that time, the fleet would retire almost all of units built in the USSR or in the 1990s, except for a few refitted platforms with extended operational lives.

Table 6: Major naval units under construction for the RUSPAC, September 2023⁶⁷

Platform	Project, class, type of platform (number ordered)	Vessels/Ships	Operational
Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines	1+ Project 955 Borey A-class SSBNs Displacement: 14,720/24,000 tonnes	RFS <i>Imperator Aleksandr III</i> RFS unknown	2023
Special-purpose submarines	1 Project 09851 Displacement: 10,000 tonnes dived (est.)	RFS <i>Khabarovsk</i>	2024–2025
Multirole submarines	3 Project 855 Yasen' M-class SSN/SSGNs Displacement: 8,600/13,800 tonnes	RFS <i>Krasnoyarsk</i> RFS <i>Perm'</i> RFS <i>Vladivostok</i>	2023 2025 2027–2028
	2 Project 636.3 Improved Varshavyanka SSK Displacement: 2,350/3,950 tonnes	RFS <i>Mozhaisk</i> RFS <i>Yakutsk</i>	2023 2024
Major surface combatants	1 Project 23900 LHD Displacement: 40,000 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Ivan Rogov</i>	By 2030
	2 Project 11711 (improved) LST Displacement: 8,000 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Vladimir Andreev</i> RFS <i>Vasiliy Trushin</i>	2025 2026
	3+ Project 22350 Gorshkov-class FFGHM Displacement: 5,400 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Admiral Amel'ko</i> RFS <i>Admiral Chichagov</i> RFS <i>Admiral Iumashev</i>	2025 2026 2027
	2 Project 22380 Steregushchiy-class FFGHM Displacement: 2,220 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Grozny</i> RFS <i>Bravy</i>	2025 2026

	5 Project 22385 Gremyashchiy-class FFGHM Displacement: 2,430 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Provorny</i> RFS <i>Buiny</i> RFS <i>Bystry</i> RFS <i>Razyashchiy</i> RFS <i>Retivy</i>	2025– 2026 2026 2027 2028 2029
	4+ Project 22800 Karakurt-class FSGM Displacement: 800 tonnes	RFS <i>Rzhev</i> RFS <i>Udomlya</i> RFS <i>Shtorm</i> RFS <i>Uragan</i>	2024 2024 2025 2025
Major auxiliaries	1 Project 23131 Akademik Pashin-class ocean-going oiler Displacement: 12,000 tonnes	RFS unknown	By 2028
	1 Project 23120 Elbrus-class ocean-going supply ship with an ice-breaking capability Displacement: 10,000 tonnes	RFS <i>Kapitan Shevchenko</i>	By 2028
	1 Project 20183TB ocean-going auxiliary/hydrographic survey ship Displacement: 6,300 tonnes (full)	RFS <i>Akademik Makeev</i>	2025
	1 Project 22010 ocean-going oceanographic research vessel Displacement: 5,200 tonnes	RFS <i>Almaz</i>	2025
	2 Project 03182 small ocean-going oiler Displacement: 3,500 tonnes	RFS <i>Mikhail Barskov</i> RFS <i>Boris Averkin</i>	2024 2024– 2025
	1 Project 19910 hydrographic ship Displacement: 1,227 tonnes	RFS <i>Vasiliy Bubnov</i>	2023

The expected numerical expansion of the frigate force would allow the RUSPAC's command to form two surface action groupings assigned to both the PRIMFLOT and the maritime element of the UCTFN-RF. In the case of the latter, assigning at least four Project 20380/20385 FFGHMs and all the current Alexandrits to the 144th brigade would free up surface warfare elements of the 36th division from supporting forward operations in the Sea of Okhotsk and Bering Sea.

The PRIMFLOT would operate a force of 10 to 12 Project 22350/20380/20385 FFGHMs and one refitted Udaloy (likely to be RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*) capable of staging out-of-area operations in northern and western Pacific and South-East Asian waters. Similarly, Russia's nuclear-powered multi-role submarine force would also have double the number of operational units available for long-range interdiction operations compared to 2022–2023 levels.

In early February 2023, it was revealed that Russia's MoD was planning to order six additional Project 22350 and the first 22350M FFGHMs, all to be built at the Amur shipyard in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure.⁶⁸ If this contract eventuates, the RUSPAC will end up operating the largest frigate force in the Russian navy (comprising Project 20380/20385 and Project 22350/22350M; see Table 7). This would further enhance the RUSPAC's capacity to sustain forward operations across the Indo-Pacific theatre.

However, challenges remain for phase three. Primarily, the inadequate rate at which new mine warfare units are being introduced given the tasks assigned to the fleet, the sheer size of the theatre, and the absence of plans to replace smaller Soviet-era coastal ASW platforms (Grisha-class).⁶⁹ Furthermore, slow modernisation plans for the air component of the fleet, and its subsequent dependence on Russia's air force, represents another challenge for the RUSPAC. Finally, Moscow's current and future ability to sustain a forward presence in the Indo-Pacific strategic theatre will continue to be shaped by two contributing factors: sufficient ocean-going underway replenishment capability and the establishment of secure overseas naval support facilities. Should Moscow succeed in implementing plans to reestablish a network of overseas naval logistical bases, the RFN would have enhanced capacity to sustain forward presence in South-East Asia and Indian Ocean waters on a more permanent basis.⁷⁰

The Kremlin understands that Russia's deepening strategic collision with the US and its allies, and the re-emergence of the Cold War–style global confrontation, will not be limited to land or cyberspace. For the first time, Russia's 2023 edition of the Foreign Policy Concept (FPC) highlights the importance of countering risks in the maritime domain (the World

Ocean) as part of the national foreign policy strategy.⁷¹ The country's strategic geography makes it susceptible to sea-based military-strategic threats. Approximately half of the entire Russian population lives either along, or in the vicinity of, the coastline, and around 60 per cent of the national industrial potential is concentrated in coastal and nearby areas, thus making them dependent on littoral shipping and consequently vulnerable to maritime threats.

According to the estimates of the Russian Naval Staff, by 2030 the United States Navy (USN) and allied navies (including the RAN) will grow in size to a point which drastically transforms Russia's threat landscape in terms of sea-based threats. According to Russia's recent threat estimates based on a possible armed conflict with the US, the USN and allied navies (carrying some 2,500 SBCMs) would be able to hit approximately 370 critical targets in the first two waves of sea-borne strikes and carrier-borne aviation strikes. By 2030, the estimated strike payload of the USN and her allies could increase to 6,000 SBCMs capable of reaching targets across 90 per cent of Russia's territory.⁷² Additionally, Russia estimates that by 2030 the USN and allied navies could form a combined force of 80 sea-borne platforms (including the RAN's Aegis-equipped Hobart class destroyers) capable of staging deterrent operations in the vicinity of Russia's shores.⁷³

Consequently, for Moscow the RFN will always remain an unavoidable, high-cost element of national security and defence posture. Unless Russia experiences a catastrophic collapse of its national economy, its ambitions to rebuild its ocean-going navy are likely to remain undeterred. However, economically, Russia has managed to skirt the brunt of international sanctions, though its economy has shrunk and declined. In early 2023, the International Monetary Fund forecasted some modest economic recovery in Russia over 2023 and 2024.⁷⁴ Politically, Putin's regime does not face a major internal challenge.

Implications for the RAN

The current state of fragile political relations between Canberra and Moscow, in which both sides consider each other as political-military adversaries, increases risks of potential confrontation in the maritime domain in the future. Hence, close attention needs to be paid to the ongoing modernisation of the RUSPAC now, given its impact on the regional balance of power. The Russian navy's intent for the Indo-Pacific theatre is not to remain nominally visible across it, but to regain a lost status of credible player in regional strategic affairs.

Russia has been part of the Indo-Pacific geostrategic landscape for nearly 300 years, periodically as one of the leading maritime powers in the region. The last such peak occurred

during the Cold War, when the SOVPAC played a special role in the system of national defence and balancing superpowers. At the height of its combat might, the fleet operated the largest surface combatant force in the Soviet Navy, including two vertical and short take-off and landing (VSTOL) aircraft carriers, and a large submarine force. It extended permanent operations across the entire Indo-Pacific theatre, one of the core factors compelling the RAN to observe closely its operational patterns and trends in force development.

Phase five of the fleet upgrade (beyond 2030) would probably focus on the introduction of next-generation systems such as the Arktur (Arcturus) strategic submarine,⁷⁵ and possibly even Russia’s new-generation aircraft carrier.⁷⁶ However, phase five is heavily dependent on: the successful implementation of phases three and four; Russia’s continuation of Putin’s current strategic course even after his eventual retirement as President; and sufficient industrial potential and satisfactory economic conditions.

Of course, Russia’s future naval force in the Pacific would be smaller in size than the SOVPAC, but more potent in some niche areas, such as strategic strike, undersea warfare capability, anti-ship strike and attack against shore, offensive hypersonics, amphibious sealift, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. More specifically, its future Pacific SSBN force would be of comparable size to the PLAN’s, though the Russian navy would operate more sophisticated and potent platforms. Outside of the nuclear-strategic realm, the RUSPAC would deploy enhanced long-range strike capability (hypersonic and cruise missiles) and underwater special task platforms, including AUVs—something that the SOVPAC fell short of.

In the short to medium-term future, the RUSPAC’s force posture may affect the RAN and allied navies’ plans and operations in the northern and north-western sectors of the Pacific. By the time the RAN commissions its first Hunter class FFGHM and commences operations of the first Virginia class SSN, the RUSPAC is expected to have completed the fourth major phase of its development, and have laid down foundations for the fifth phase. By the end of phase four, the RUSPAC’s estimated order of battle would consist of no less than 45 core warships, including a combined force of at least 19 nuclear-powered and conventional submarines (see Table 7), supported by minor combat and auxiliary elements. Most of these units would be of a new design and newly built.

Table 7: RUSPAC 2030 estimated order of battle (the combat nucleus)

Type	Class	Operational	Planned
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Submarines			
SSBN	Project 955 Borey	2	
	Project 955A Borey-M	3	1–2
SSGN/SSN	Project 855M Yasen'-M	4	
	Project 949AM Oscar-II	2	
	Project 971M Akula-M	(1) ^a	
SSAN	Project 09851 Khabarovsk	1	1
	Project 09852 Belgorod	1	
SSK	Project 636.3 Improved Kilo	6	
Major and core coastal defence surface combatants			
DDGHM	Project 1155M Udaloy-M	1	
FFGHM 1st Rank	Project 22350/22350M Admiral Gorshkov/Super Gorshkov	3	(6) ^b
FFGHM 2nd Rank	Project 20380/20385 Steregushchiy/Gremyashchiy	12	
LHD	Project 22900 Ivan Rogov	1	
LST	Project 11711 Vladimir Andreev	2	
FSGM	Project 22800 Karakurt	4	2
MCC	Project 12700 Aleksandrit	3	unknown

^a The Akula-M may remain operational (depends on the situation in 2030)

^b The order for construction has yet to arrive

The fleet would have more assets to support forward operations in waters of South-East Asia and the East Indian Ocean, thus extending Russia's reach closer to the RAN's areas of immediate responsibility. This should be acknowledged in the context of possible joint RUSPAC-PLAN forward operations within the Pacific maritime theatre. At the same time, the western and north-western Pacific and the High North will remain principal areas where

Russia may have greater ability to challenge Australian and allied naval operations in times of crisis and conflict.

The AUKUS trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the US may act as an additional motivator for the deepening of the Sino-Russian political-military ties, including in the naval sphere. Moscow perceives the pact to be another US-led balancing act designed to contain Moscow and Beijing, as noted by the Secretary of Russia's Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in his opening address to the delegates of the Army 2023 international defence exposition and congress in Russia on 15 August 2023, Putin emphasised Moscow's suspicions that NATO and AUKUS might eventually integrate their structures into one.⁷⁸

Overall, based on Putin's remarks, it seems likely that Russia has recalibrated its security risks assessment of Australia in its Indo-Pacific threat calculus. First, Moscow would expect the introduction of regular rotational operations of the USN and the Royal Navy's (RN) nuclear-powered submarines from HMAS Stirling under Submarine Rotational Force - West (SRF-West) arrangements. Second, Russia would expect the RAN to, at some point, transition to operate a force of advanced SSNs independently, as well as part of allied maritime operations.

Australia's 2023 Defence Strategic Review (DSR) acknowledged that the US was no longer the dominant superpower in the Indo-Pacific, and that the region was experiencing renewed great power strategic competition.⁷⁹ While China continues to be the primary focus of concern, Russia's force naval moderation in the Pacific should not be underestimated. For Australia, the potential challenge of contest with the PLAN might remain the central focus of security concerns; however, the progressive development of Russian naval power in the Pacific and its future planning indeed require closer attention from Canberra.

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Appendix 1

RUSPAC-2023 organisational structure



Note: Minor afloat auxiliary and shore-based logistical support units are not listed.

Appendix 2

Reported hydrographic and special survey operations of the RFN in the Indo-Pacific and within the RUSPAC's area of responsibility, 2014 to early 2023⁸⁰

Month, year	Fleet	Operational units	Area of exploratory operations
July 2014	Pacific	RFS <i>Marshal Gelovani</i> and RFS <i>Vitse-Admiral Vorontsov</i>	Seas of Japan and Okhotsk
Mid-2014	Pacific	RFS <i>Antarktida</i>	South China Sea and the Strait of Singapore
August– December 2014	Baltic	RFS <i>Admiral Vladimirskiy</i>	Arctic (northern sea route) and northern Pacific
Mid–late 2015	Pacific	RFS <i>Marshal Gelovani</i> and RFS <i>Fotiy Krylov</i> (ocean-going tug)	Southern and south-western Pacific
August–October 2015	Pacific	RFS <i>Vitse-Admiral Vorontsov</i>	Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, Chukchi and Bering seas
November 2015–April 2016	Baltic	RFS <i>Admiral Vladimirskiy</i>	Indian Ocean and the Antarctic
Mid-2016	Pacific	RFS <i>Marshal Gelovani</i>	South China Sea
October 2016–March 2017	Black Sea	RFS <i>Donuslav</i>	Black, Mediterranean and Red seas, Gulf of Aden
April–August 2017	Baltic	RFS <i>Admiral Vladimirskiy</i>	Indian Ocean
October 2017	Pacific	RFS <i>Pegas</i>	Sea of Okhotsk
October–November 2017	Northern	RFS <i>Yantar</i>	Indian Ocean

December 2017– February 2018	Black Sea	RFS <i>Donuslav</i>	Red Sea, Indian Ocean/ Arabian Sea off Socotra Island
February–April 2018	Baltic	RFS <i>Admiral Vladimirskiy</i>	Indian Ocean
August–October 2018	Northern	RFS <i>Gorisont</i>	The Arctic Ocean, Bering Sea, seas of Okhotsk and Japan
Mid–late 2018	Pacific	RFS <i>Pegas</i>	Chukchi Sea
January 2020	Black Sea	RFS <i>Ivan Khurs</i>	Arabian Sea
Early March–mid-June 2020	Pacific	RFS <i>Marshal Gelovani</i>	Southern Pacific— Papua New Guinea, Indian Ocean, the Antarctic
June 2020	Pacific	RFS <i>Pegas</i>	Sea of Okhotsk along Kuril Islands
April–May 2020	Pacific	RFS <i>Fotiy Krylov</i>	Philippine Sea
December 2019– early- June 2020	Baltic	RFS <i>Admiral Vladimirskiy</i>	Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean
Late June–mid-July 2022	Pacific	RFS <i>Igor' Belousov</i> and RFS <i>Aleksandr Rogotskiy</i>	Sea of Okhotsk off Matua Island

Appendix 3


Reported Russia-China exercise and operational activities, 2005 to September 2023⁸¹

Exercise	Exercise Area	Forces involved
Peace Mission 2005 18–25 August	Shandong Peninsula, Yellow Sea	10,000 personnel; 65 warships and auxiliaries; over 70 aircraft; over 100 armoured vehicles
Peace Blue Shield 2009 18 September	Gulf of Aden	6 warships and auxiliaries
Maritime Interaction 2012 22–27 April	Yellow Sea	25 warships and auxiliaries; 22 aircraft; naval infantry and special forces
Maritime Interaction 2013 5–12 July	Sea of Japan	19 warships and auxiliaries; over 10 aircraft; naval infantry and special forces
Maritime Interaction 2014 20–26 May	East China Sea	12 warships and auxiliaries
Maritime Interaction 2015 16–20 May 20–28 August	Mediterranean Sea Sea of Japan	9 warships and auxiliaries 22 warships and auxiliaries; 23 aircraft; over 500 marines (naval infantry); over 30 items of heavy equipment
Maritime Interaction 2016 12–19 September	South China Sea	18 warships and auxiliaries; 21 aircraft; naval infantry and special forces
Maritime Interaction 2017 21–28 July 18–25 September	Baltic Sea Seas of Japan and Okhotsk	13 warships and auxiliaries; 8 aircraft; naval infantry

Maritime Interaction 2018	Yellow Sea	Cancelled
Maritime Interaction 2019 29 April–4 May	Yellow Sea	15 warships and auxiliaries; 10 aircraft; naval infantry
MOSI 2019 25–30 November	Horn of Africa, south Atlantic Ocean	6 warships and auxiliaries
Marine Security Belt 2019 27–30 December	Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea	Over 10 warships and auxiliaries
Maritime Interaction 2020	Cancelled (COVID-2019)	
Maritime Interaction 2021 14–17 October	Sea of Japan	Approximately 12 warships and auxiliaries, 12 aircraft
Joint naval patrol 2021 17–23 October	Western Pacific	10 warships and auxiliaries
Joint naval patrol 2022 10 September–3 October	Seas of Bering, Okhotsk, Japan, Philippines and South China	7 warships and auxiliaries
Maritime Interaction 2022 21–27 December	East China Sea	Over 10 warships and auxiliaries, naval aircraft
MOSI 2023 17–26 February	Indian Ocean	6 warships and auxiliaries
Marine Security Belt 2023 15–19 March	Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea	Over 6 warships and auxiliaries

North. Interaction 2023 20–23 July	Sea of Japan	Over 10 warships and auxiliaries, over 30 naval aircraft
Joint naval patrol 2023 27 July–19 August	Northern and western Pacific	11 warships and auxiliaries

 Exercises also involving the South African Navy

 Exercises also involving the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy

¹ Alexey D Muraviev, *The Russian Pacific Fleet: From the Crimean War to Perestroika*, Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs, no. 20, Department of Defence, 2007, p 3, navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/PIAMA20.pdf.

² Admiral N Evmenov, 'Rol' i Mesto Voenno-Morskogo Flota v Voinakh i Vooruzhennykh Konfliktakh' (The navy's role and place in wars and armed conflicts), *Morskoi Sbornik*, no. 11, 2022, p 5.

³ During the Cold War, the Soviet nuclear submarine base in Vilyuchinsk received the nickname 'Hornets' Nest'.

⁴ Under the new official classification of the RFN, the modernised Udaloy-class RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov* is now referred to as a frigate, while all Project 20380/385 frigates are being referred to as corvettes.

⁵ The latter is largely responsible for aerial patrol and interdiction support operations over the Pacific maritime theatre.

⁶ Effectively, the MG-PAC units would form part of the RUSPAC's secondary combat arm in wartime.

⁷ Clauses 15.1/2/3/4 of *Morskaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (*Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation*) *Kremlin.ru*, 2022, kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48215.

⁸ Historically, the Russian approach to combat planning in the Pacific maritime theatre was based on a layered defence: the outer defensive perimeter (some 2,000 kilometres from the shoreline) and the inner defence perimeter.

⁹ Russian official documents continue make references to the Asia-Pacific region and, separately, the Indian Ocean region, instead of the Indo-Pacific.

¹⁰ Clauses 50.4/5/6 of *Morskaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii*.

¹¹ Olesya Stepanova, 'Glavkom VMF Rossii Evmenov Pozdravil Voennykh Moryakov s Dnem Tikhookeanskogo Flota' (Chief of the Russian Navy Evmenov congratulated military seamen with the Pacific Fleet Day), *Zvezda*, 21 May 2021, tvzvezda.ru/news/2021521033-o2w1S.html.

¹² The emphasis on prioritising the upgrade of the support arm of the fleet was driven by the critical state of the auxiliary force deployed in the Pacific. Other considerations include delays in the production of the new line of warships and their priority allocation to the Baltic, Black Sea and Northern fleets. The most noticeable additions to the fleet's strike element were four Borey/Borey-A class SSBNs; the first Yasen'-M class SSGN; four Project 20380/20385 2nd Rank FFGHMs; three new Project 12700 mine warfare ships (MCC); and nine surface combatants build for the MG-PAC (corvette-type Project 22460 and 10410 patrol ships), which could be utilised in a warfighting environment.

¹³ *Jane's Fighting Ships* (editions 2013–14 to 2021–22); *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2013–22); *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (issues 2013–23); *RIA Novosti* (issues 2014–23), *TASS* (issues 2013–23); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2013–23); data collected by the author.

¹⁴ Sergei Cherkasov, 'Novye Nositeli "Kalibrov"' (New carriers of the Kalibrs), *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 1–7 February 2017, 4(688), p 9.

¹⁵ The news about the reclassification of the RFS *Ryazan'* was revealed by the Commander of the SFC-RUSPAC, Vice-Admiral Vladimir Dmitriev, in his interview with the Russian army's daily newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*. Yuri Rossolov, 'Garant Stabil'nosti v Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskom Regione' (A guarantee of stability in the Asia-Pacific region), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 March 2021, p 7.

¹⁶ Given its ageing status and low combat value as a multi-role platform, it is likely that the RFS *Ryazan'* will be decommissioned in due course.

¹⁷ Some latest open-source reporting suggests that a total of 14 Boreys will be built for the RUSNOR and the RUSPAC, which would probably increase the size of the Russian SSBN force in the Pacific to seven boats. 'Istochnik: Kreiser "Pyotr Velikiy" Peredast Svoe Imya Podvodnomu Atomnomu Raketonostsu' (Source: The Pyotr Velikiy cruiser will transfer her name to nuclear-powered missile-carrying submarine), *TASS*, 20 April 2023, tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/17566059.

¹⁸ Anton Lavrov, Aleksei Ramm, 'V Tikhom Omute' (Inside a quiet whirlpool), *Izvestia*, 20 February 2023, pp 1, 3; 'Diviziu Spetslodok s "Poseidonami" Sformiruiut na Kamchatke v 2025 Godu' (A division with the Poseidon armed special submarines will be formed in Kamchatka in 2025), *TASS*, 3 April 2023, tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/17431799.

¹⁹ 'Vityaz-D Deep-Sea Autonomous Underwater Vehicle', *Naval Technology*, 3 September 2020, naval-technology.com/projects/vityaz-d/.

²⁰ *The Military Balance* (editions 1993 to 2023); *Morskoi Sbornik* (editions 1992–23); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 1998–23); *Voенно-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2013–22); *Nezavisimoe Voенnoe Obozrenie* (issues 1999–23); *TASS* (issues 2000–23); data collected by the author.

²¹ Aleksei Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoi, 'K Boiu na TOF' (Combat ready in the Pacific Fleet), *Izvestia*, 2 December 2021, p 7.

²² The first segment (three units) is under the construction at the Severnaya Verf' shipyard in St Petersburg.

²³ Aleksei Ramm, Roman Kretsul, Bogdan Stepovoi, 'K Pokhodu na TOF' (To the deployment to the Pacific Fleet), *Izvestia*, 5 June 2020, p 3.

²⁴ Captain 1st Rank (retd) A.I. Ismailov, Captain 1st rank (retd) V.V. Puchnin, Rear-Admiral A.Iy. Sysuyev, 'Problemy Mobilizatsionnogo Obespecheniya Rossiiskogo Voенno-Morskogo Flota i Vozmozhnye Puti ikh Razresheniya' [Problems of the mobilizational support of the Russian navy and possible ways to resolve them], *Voennaya Mysl'*, 12, December 2022,, p 69.

²⁵ Roman Kretsul, Aleksei Ramm, 'Suda i Delo: VMF Obnovit "Voенno-Buksirny" Flot' (Ships and Business: the navy would replenish the 'military-tug' fleet), *Izvestia*, 6 March 2023, p 3.

NB Prior to the imposition of western sanctions, Russian shipbuilders used to order a considerable portion of on-board equipment for the navy's auxiliaries from abroad. The current state of hostility in Russia–West relations force Russian design and production bureaus to compensate for the emerged capability shortfalls by developing domestic analogues.

²⁶ *Morskoi Sbornik* (editions 1992–2023); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 1998–2023); *Voенно-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2013–2022); *Nezavisimoe Voенnoe Obozrenie* (issues 1999–2023); *TASS* (issues 2000–2023); data collected by the author.

²⁷ Aleksei Ramm, Aleksei Kozachenko, Bogdan Stepovoi, 'Bydadut Broniu. Brigady Morpekhov Usilyat Tankovymi Podrazdeleniyami' (Will receive armour. Marine brigades will be strengthened by tank units), *Izvestia*, 22 October 2019, p 6.

²⁸ Konstantin Lobkov, 'Gvardeitsami Stali v Boyakh' (Became guards in battles), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 March 2022, p 8.

²⁹ The 155th naval infantry brigade was one of the first Russian military units to be awarded Guards rank on the basis of combat performance in the Ukraine war. Lobkov, 'Gvardeitsami Stali v Boyakh'.

³⁰ For example, no less than three new battalions *Tigr* (Tiger) were formed on the basis of the 155th brigade. Dmitriy Boltenev, 'Morskimi Tempami: kak Izmenitsya Struktura Chernykh Beretov' (By maritime tempo: How would the structure of black berets change), *Izvestia*, 3 January 2023, iz.ru/1450124/dmitrii-boltenkov/morskimi-tempami-kak-izmenitsia-struktura-chernykh-beretov-v-blizhaishie-gody.

³¹ 'Vse Tseli, Kotorye My Pered Soboi Stavim, Budut, Bezuslovno, Dostignuty' (All tasks, which we appoint to ourselves, without a doubt will be met), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 December 2022, p 4.

³² Anton Lavrov, Bogdan Stepovoi, 'Polyarnym Vetrom: v Arktiku Letyat "Morskie Okhotniki"' (By polar wind: 'sea hunters' are flying into the Arctic), *Izvestia*, 29 June 2020, iz.ru/1028439/anton-lavrov-bogdan-stepovoi/poliarnym-vetrom-v-arktiku-letiat-morskie-okhotniki.

³³ Anton Lavrov, Roman Kretsul, 'K Boiu na TOF. Tikhii Okean Zakroyet Iskadrilya Perekhvatchikov' (To battle with the Pacific Fleet. The Pacific Ocean would be covered by an interceptor squadron), *Izvestia*, 3 July 2020, p 6.

³⁴ It is probable that the Russians would reanimate the disbanded 365th Fighter regiment as part of its fighter-interceptor force expansion. It is also possible that Su-35s deployed to Kamchatka would form a standalone squadron as an element of a new regiment.

³⁵ Anton Lavrov, Anna Cherepanova, "'Sukhoi" Klimat Kamchatki. Na Poluostrove Razmestyat Manevrennye Su-35' (The Sukhoi climate of Kamchatka. Manoeuvre Su-35s would be stationed on the peninsula), *Izvestia*, 29 June 2021, p 3.

N.B. It was noted that the Su-35s in Elizovo would be based there on rotation basis and not formally assigned to the PFNA. Rotations will be supported by elements of the 11th AF/AD Army of the Eastern MD.

³⁶ According to the announced plans, the future AF/AD army would comprise the existing 53rd AD division and a new air division (likely to consist of two fighter regiments and other units).

Sergei Val'chenko, Aleksei Ramm, Evgeniy Andreev, 'Dal'niy Vostok Prikroiut Morskim Vozdushnym Shchitom' (The Far East will be shielded by a maritime airborne shield), *Izvestia*, 18 December 2017, iz.ru/679966/sergei-valchenko-aleksei-ramm-evgenii-andreev/dalnii-vostok-prikroiut-morskim-vozdushnym-shchitom.

³⁷ The ongoing war against Ukraine and the subsequent losses of aircraft draw pressure the Russians to prioritise the replenishment of combat losses in frontline units as well as the bolstering of air capability along the border with the Baltics, Poland (Kaliningrad exclave) and Finland over forming new units in remote operational areas such as Kamchatka.

³⁸ Aleksei Ramm, Roman Kretsul, Yulia Leonova, "'Lebedinaya Staya": Tikhii Okean Prikroiut Strategicheskie Tu-160' (A swan pack: Strategic Tu-160 would shield the Pacific Ocean), *Izvestia*, 24 July 2023, iz.ru/1548425/aleksei-ramm-roman-kretcul-iuliia-leonova/lebedinaia-staia-tikhii-okean-prikroiut-strategicheskie-tu-160.

³⁹ The missile complexes armed with the Bal system are expected to receive a long-range variant of the X-35 SSM, the X-35U.

Dmitri Boltenev, 'S "Bala" na Korabl: Minoborony Perevooruzhit Raketchikov' (From the Bal to a ship: The Ministry of Defence will rearm missilemen), *Izvestia*, 9 January 2022, iz.ru/1271796/dmitrii-boltenkov/s-bala-na-korabl-minoborony-perevooruzhit-raketchikov.

⁴⁰ Boltenev, 'S "Bala" na Korabl'

⁴¹ Aleksei Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoi, 'Beringovaya Oborona: dlya Zashchity Severo-Vostoka RF Sozdaiut Novuiu Diviziu' (The Bering defence: A new division has been formed for the defence of Russia's north-east), *Izvestia*, 24 January 2022, p 7.

⁴² More combat and support units of this new division were slowly being formed.

⁴³

Aleksei Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoi, 'Kamchatskiy Hub' (The Kamchatka hub), *Izvestia*, 27 October 2021, p 7;

Aleksei Ramm, Aleksei Kozachenko, 'Dok ne Vydat' (A dock will not reveal), *Izvestia*, 7 November 2019, p 6.

⁴⁴ Roman Kretsul, Anna Cherepanova, 'Kamchatskiy Hub: Miniborony Moderniziruyet Samy Vostochny Aerodrom' (The Kamchatka hub: The Ministry of Defence is modernising its most eastern airfield), *Izvestia*, 29 April 2021, p 2.

⁴⁵ Roman Kretsul, Anna Cherepanova, 'Korabli v Liuboi Gavani. Na Flote Sozdaiut Mobil'nye Morskoie Bazy' (Ships in any harbor. The navy will create mobile naval bases), *Izvestia*, 20 August 2021, pp 1–2.

⁴⁶ Bogdan Stepovoi, Roman Kretsul, 'Inzhenery po Flotski. Dlya Chego na Tikhom Okeane Sformirovan Novy Polk' (Navy engineers: Why a new regiment was formed in the Pacific Ocean), *Izvestia*, 20 September 2021, p 6.

⁴⁷ Clause 23.6, *Morskaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 2022.

⁴⁸ Such agreements were signed with India, Indonesia, Iran, Madagascar, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

⁴⁹ Alexey Muraviev, 'Russia's Red Star in the Red Sea', *The Interpreter*, 30 November 2020, lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/russia-s-red-star-red-sea.

⁵⁰ Darya Labutina, "'Rossiyane Predpochli Ostavat'sya Vmeste s Sudantsami v Khartume'" (The Russians preferred to stay together with the Sudanese in Khartoum), *Izvestia*, 12 May 2023, iz.ru/1511433/daria-labutina/rossiiane-predpochli-ostavatsia-vmeste-s-sudantcami-v-khartume.

⁵¹ Nikolai Matiushin, *17-ya Operativnaya Eskadra Tikhookeanskogo Flota* (The 17th Operational Squadron of the Pacific Fleet), Moskva: Kuchkovo Pole, 2011, p 397.

⁵² It is worth noting that the RUSPAC's out-of-area operations paralleled at times with occasional long-range missions staged by Russian naval units drawn from other fleets, mainly in the Indian Ocean maritime theatre.

⁵³ As collected data shows, some of these surveys took place in areas of heavy maritime traffic or near points previously used by the SOVPAC and other fleets for mooring or forward basing.

⁵⁴ *Morskoi Sbornik* (editions 2017–2023); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2017–2023); *TASS* (issues 2017–2023); data collected by the author.

⁵⁵ *Morskoi Sbornik*, no. 1, 2023, p 19.

⁵⁶ Between 2017 and 2023, the RUSPAC was awarded the status of the best combat-ready fleet six times by the CN-RFN. The award was based on the highest number of the Chief's trophies, which were won by the fleet's units in some 30 to 40 different categories every year (for example, the best SLBM or SLCM launch; the best submarine torpedo attack; the best surface combatant; the best mine warfare and mine counter-measures training et cetera). The only time that the fleet did not come first was in the 2021 training year. Data is collected by the author.

⁵⁷ *Morskoi Sbornik* (editions 2020–2023); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2020–2023); *TASS* (issues 2020–2023); data collected by the author.

⁵⁸ Clause 59.1. *Morskaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 2022.

⁵⁹ *Morskaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (The Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation), Kremlin.ru, 26 July 2015, static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/uAFi5nvux2twaqjftS5yrlZUVTJan77L.pdf.

⁶⁰ 'Vstrecha Glavkoma VMF i Ministra Oborony Kitaya' (A meeting between Chief of Navy and China's defence minister), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 July 2023, p 1.

⁶¹ For more analysis of the potential implications of the Russo-Chinese convergence in the defence sphere, see Alexey D Muraviev, 'Strategic reality check: The current state of Russia-China defence cooperation and the prospects of a deepening "near alliance"', *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies*, no. 3 (1), 2021, pp 41–48.

⁶² Natalia Galimova, Yulia Volkova, 'Shoigu Dopustil Sovmestnye Ucheniya s KNDR' (Shoigu contemplated joint exercises with the DPRK), *RBK daily*, 4 September 2023, rbc.ru/politics/04/09/2023/64f5e68f9a7947d392a68185.

⁶³ Mikhail Khodaryonok, 'Tikhookeanskomu Flotu Vypala Rol Vtorogo Plana: chto Vkhodit v Osnovu Boyevykh Sil TOF i na Chto on Sposoben' (The Pacific Fleet was given secondary role: What does the RUSPAC consist of and what is it capable of), *Gazeta.ru*, 21 May 2023, gazeta.ru/army/2023/05/21/16720328.shtml.

⁶⁴ Oleg Surovtsev, 'Vysochaishaya Otsenka Khoda Vnezapnoi Proverki' (The highest grade of the process of a snap check-up), *Suvorovskiy Natisk*, no. 14, 21 April 2023, p 1.

⁶⁵ Aleksei Ramm, Roman Kretsul, 'Minnoe More. Baltiiskiy Flot Usilyat Tral'shchikom-Robotom' (Mined Sea: The Baltic Fleet will be strengthened by a robot-minesweeper), *Izvestia*, 28 March 2023, p 2.

⁶⁶ Currently, the 29th Submarine Division of the RUSNOR is the only organisational structure that operates special-purpose submarines and diving vehicles.

⁶⁷ *Jane's Fighting Ships* (editions 2013–2014 to 2021–2022); *Voenna-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2013–2022); *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (issues 2013–2023); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2013–2023); *RIA Novosti* (issues 2014–2023), *TASS* (issues 2013–2023); data collected by the author.

⁶⁸ 'Istochnik: na Forume "Armiya 2023" Podpishut Kontrakt na Stroitel'stvo Shesti Fregatov' (A contract for the construction of six frigates will be signed at the Army 2023 forum), *TASS*, 2 February 2023, tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/16942515.

⁶⁹ Although, the new Project 20380/20385 FFGHMs deploy some ASW capability, their primary mission is surface action and strikes against land, hence a stronger emphasis on strike capabilities. It would be inappropriate to consider them as sufficient replacement of the ageing Grishas.

⁷⁰ The analyses of Russia's forward deployments since 2010 show that, in times of operational need, the RFN drew units from all of its fleets in support of forward operations in the Indo-Pacific strategic theatre.

⁷¹ Clause 36.1/2/3, *Kontseptsiya Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation), *Kremlin.ru*, 31 March 2023, kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70811

⁷² Admiral NA Evmenov, Captain 1st Rank VV Puchnin (ret'd), Lieutenant-Colonel YaV Eshchenko, 'Osnovnye Tendentsii Izmeneniya Kharaktera i Soderzhaniya Voennykh Ugroz Rossiiskoi Federatsii s Okeanskikh i Morskikh Napravleniy' (Major tendencies in the changing character and the content of military threats to the Russian Federation from oceanic and sea directions), *Voennaya Mysl'*, no. 5, 2023, pp 21–23.

⁷³ Evmenov, Puchnin, Eschenko, 'Osnovnye Tendentsii', p 23.

⁷⁴ 'Economic "Momentum" Prompts IMF to Raise Russia's Economic Forecast', *The Moscow Times*, 12 April 2023, themoscowtimes.com/2023/04/11/russian-authorities-open-criminal-case-against-rusnews-journalist-a80792

⁷⁵ HI Sutton, 'Russia Reveals New Radical Stealth Missile Submarine', *Naval News*, 16 August 2022, navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/08/russia-reveals-radical-new-stealth-missile-submarine

⁷⁶ It is possible that the Zvezda shipyard in Russia's far east would become a facility of choice for the country's future aircraft carrier construction program. Hence, it is likely that RUSPAC would be chosen as the first fleet operator of a new-generation aircraft carrier.

⁷⁷ Vitaliy Tseplyaev, 'Tsepnaya Reaktsiya Khaosa. Nikolai Patrushev – o Chuzhdykh Rossii Soiuzakh i Tsennostiyakh' (The chain reaction of the chaos. Nikolai Patrushev on alien to Russia alliances and values), *Argumenty i Fakty*, no. 38, 22 September 2021, aif.ru/politics/russia/cepnaya_reakciya_haosa_nikolay_patrushev_o_chuzhdyh_rossii_soyuzah_i_cennostyah.

⁷⁸ Vladimir Kuzar', Oleg Falichev, 'Mirovomu Soobshchestvu Vmeste, na Ravnykh Predstoit Sozidat' Kontury Budushchego' (The international community will have to create counters of the future together as equals), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 August 2023, p 6.

⁷⁹ *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2023, p 17, defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review.

⁸⁰ *Morskoi Sbornik* (editions 2014–2023); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2014–2023); *TASS* (issues 2014–2023); *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (issues 2014–2023); data collected by the author.

⁸¹ *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2005 to 2023); *Morskoi Sbornik* (issues 2005 to 2023); *TASS* (issues 2005 to 2023); *Izvestia* (issues 2005 to 2023); *Ria Novosti* (issues 2005 to 2023); data is collected by the author.