SPECIAL REPORT

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Russia's military power in the Indo-Asia–Pacific under Vladimir Putin

Alexey D Muraviev

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Cover image: Primorye Territory, Russia. 6 April, 2016. Kamov Ka-52 attack helicopters and The *Admiral Nevelskiy* large landing ship take part in a military drill conducted by Russian Pacific Fleet's marine regiments and Russian Eastern Military District's mechanised infantry brigade at the Klerk range. © Yuri Smityuk/TASS/Alamy Live News

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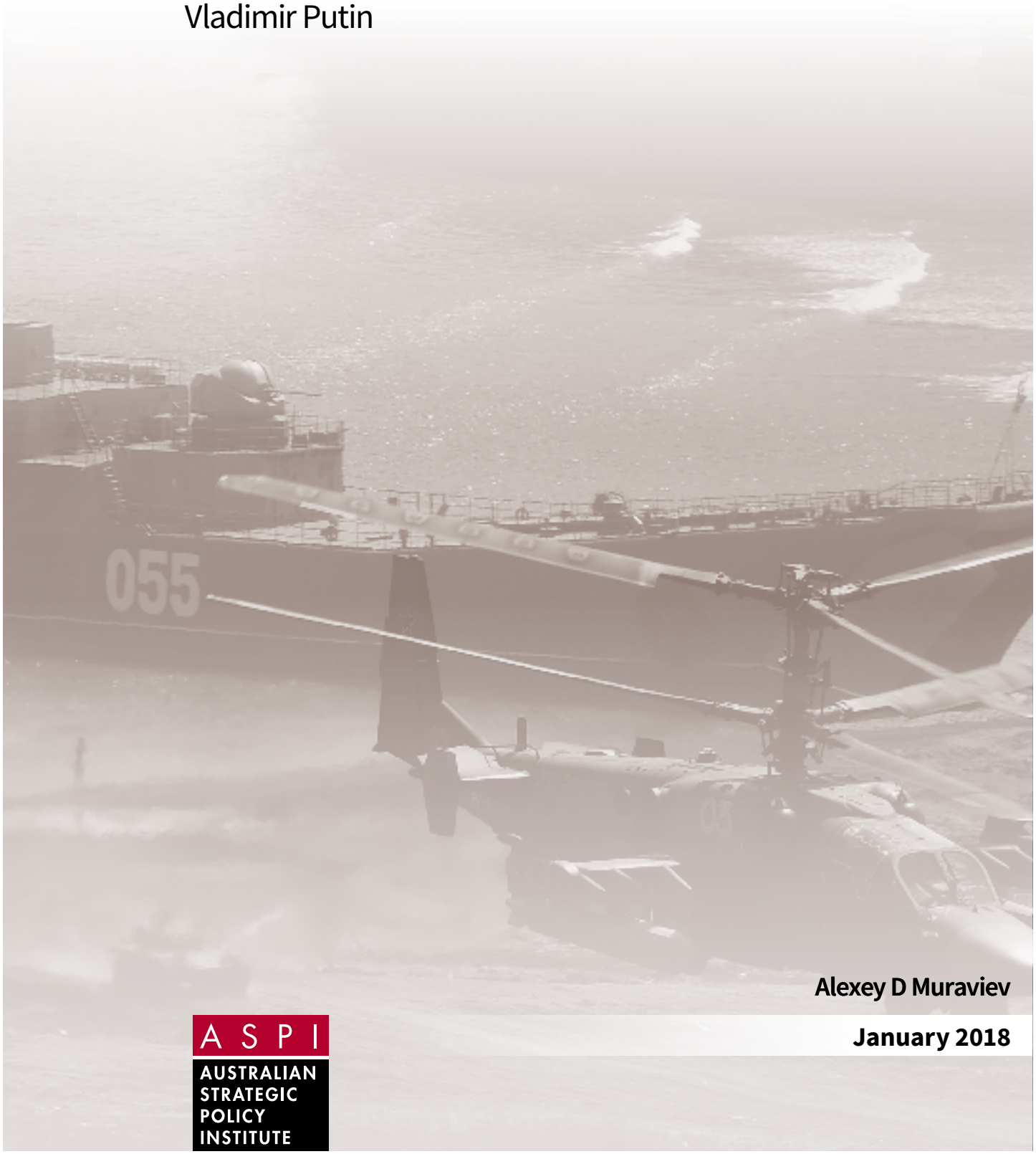

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current perceptions of Russia as a power factor in the Indo-Asia–Pacific (IndAsPac) geopolitical system are very much influenced by established post-Cold War assumptions that Moscow is no longer able to influence the regional geostrategic landscape because of its reduced military power and limited economic engagement with the region, and thus should be disregarded as a player worth considering and factoring into any strategic calculus.

In the 2000s, the Russian military began gradually rebuilding its fallen combat potential. Under President Vladimir Putin's leadership, the once cash-strapped national military machine received a massive financial boost and, more importantly, full political support, which remains unchanged to date. Qualitative upgrades of Russian modern military power, while visible, remain neglected by the Western strategic and defence community.

Russia's current regional security and defence policy is driven by a pragmatic approach of conflict avoidance and non-interference in third parties' geopolitical issues, unless they're of direct importance to Moscow's strategic interests. In Russia's regional defence planning, the emphasis is on strengthening the 200–300-kilometre defence perimeter along the Pacific coastline. Any large-scale military threats that can't be neutralised by the conventional component are likely to escalate the conflict pattern into a nuclear phase, which may include the employment of both tactical and strategic nuclear assets in combat.

Amid the current geostrategic realities of Northeast Asia, Russia finds itself in a very complex and potentially fragile neighbourhood in which three major nuclear powers (the United States (US), Russia, China) and one undeclared minor nuclear power (North Korea) are present. Russia's territorial disputes with the US over the Bering Strait area and with Japan over the Kurils / Northern Territories are just part of the region's complexity, which is also characterised by territorial disputes between the People's Republic of China (PRC), Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Finally, the high-intensity confrontation on the Korean peninsula, with which Russia's Maritime Province shares a land border, provides Moscow with additional grounds for strategic concern.

When assessing the possibility of the country becoming engaged in a large-scale military conflict in the future, Russian strategic and defence thinkers don't rule out the possibility of a serious military conflict in the Far East and Western Pacific. Several scenarios dominate ongoing debates, but prominent among them are a war between Russia and China over the Russian Far East, and a war between China and a US-led regional coalition for supremacy in the Pacific, with Russia indirectly involved in the confrontation. Neither scenario is expected to unfold in the next 10 years, but these prognoses are partially triggering an ongoing capability upgrade east of the Urals.

Despite heightened geopolitical tensions with Washington and NATO, Russia's strategic thinking and planning factors in a lower level of political–military confrontation with the US and its Pacific allies compared to the Cold War. Another factor that's widely acknowledged is Russia's significantly improved strategic relations with the PRC and the subsequent easing of the operational need to maintain substantial military groupings along the Sino-Russian border.

Over the past 10 years, Russia has steadily increased its defence cooperation throughout Asia. Under Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Ministry of Defence has intensified its international cooperation with foreign counterparts, thus making defence diplomacy one of its core priorities. Russia is engaged in a number of regional security structures, such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus, the Shangri-La Dialogue and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, but is also very active in developing key bilateral ties. Moscow sees opportunities for military-technological and maritime security cooperation; peacekeeping; search and rescue and disaster relief; combating various forms of organised crime, such as piracy, narcotraffic and smuggling; and counterterrorism.

Russia's declared emphasis on cooperation indicates that confidence building is high on Moscow's regional security agenda. The development of close and trusted relations with regional militaries is being pursued through consultations, exchanges and regular joint exercises.

This report is organised in the following manner. Part 1 reviews the evolution of Russia's strategic and defence engagement in the IndAsPac. It also critically reviews Russia's regional defence strategy, including threats perceptions, and principal vectors of regional engagement, predominantly through its active defence diplomacy. Part 2 provides a detailed account of major modernisation trends in Russian military power east of the Urals over the past six years and patterns in operational and exercise activity, including across the IndAsPac.

RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC PUSH TO THE PACIFIC: A RETROSPECTIVE

Current perceptions of Russia as a power factor in the Indo-Asia–Pacific (IndAsPac) geopolitical system are very much influenced by established post-Cold War assumptions that Moscow is no longer able to influence the regional geostrategic landscape because of its reduced military power and limited economic engagement with the region, and thus should be disregarded as a player worth considering and factoring into in any strategic calculus. However, there has been more appreciation of Russia's renewed interests in the IndAsPac region lately, particularly following the APEC 2012 Summit in Vladivostok. The predominant view remains that, as Andrew Kuchins notes, Russia is an 'unusual case' among other major Asian players.[1]

A paradox in long-term views of Russia in the IndAsPac is often highlighted by established geopolitical stereotypes that consider the nation as a Europe-preoccupied Eurasian power, with nothing other than declaratory intent and geography to position it in Pacific Asia. What's often disregarded is the history of Russia's intent to secure its strategic role in not just Central Asia but also Pacific Asia, as well as in the Indian Ocean region.

Historically, Russian strategic involvement in IndAsPac affairs was largely associated with its ability to achieve and sustain strategic reach in the maritime domain. From 1647, when the Russians founded the seaport of Okhotsk, which became a naval facility and a home port of the Okhotsk Flotilla on 21 May 1731,[2] the country mounted a steady push to become an active actor in regional affairs, driven by an economic paradigm rather than by immediate geopolitical or security concerns. The Russian-American Company, which was established in 1784, supported Russian economic penetration of the Far East and North America, where the Russians had established relatively large settlements (including commercial ports) as far south as modern San Francisco.[3]

By the mid-19th century, Russia's strategic agenda in the Pacific began shifting from an economics-driven rationale to a more assertive geopolitical and geostrategic approach, largely triggered by the country's balancing games with other major European powers, and engagement with regional players, among them the Chinese and Japanese empires. The treaties of Aigun (1858) and Beijing (1860) with China allowed Russia access to warm-water ports on the Sea of Japan, which triggered a concerted naval build-up of a dedicated ocean-going force for the Pacific theatre. In June 1860, the military post of Vladivostok was founded on the shores of Golden Horn Bay, becoming Russia's main naval base in the Pacific in 1871.[4]

Following the deployment of a power projection capability to the strategic theatre, the Russian empire started exploring geopolitical opportunities across the IndAsPac and sought to sustain its naval operations by acquiring access to a convenient harbour in the South China Sea (SCS) or nearby. The Russians were actively engaged in exploration across the Pacific and in regularised transit operations, which increased their visibility to other regional polities, including the Australian colonies.

The first Russian warship, *Neva*, arrived in Sydney on 4 June 1807, 19 years after the foundation of the new colony of New South Wales.[5] From 1807 to 1935, 13 Russian ships called on Sydney, while in 1823 two vessels travelled to Hobart. Those ships were either carrying supplies for colonies of the Russian-American Company or on exploratory expeditions.[6]

Despite an initial warm welcome, Russia was viewed with much suspicion by Australians, and this was only heightened following the Crimean War of 1854–56. The perceived threat of attack from Russia was used to justify the construction of an island fortress in Sydney Harbour, and a number of volunteer forces were established.[7] Russia's naval expeditions to Australia were irregular after the Crimean War, and Russian ships that visited towards the end of the 19th century added further to a Russophobic sentiment that became dominant in the Australian national psyche for a long time to come. This was also one of the contributing influences that led the Australian colonies to continue their foreign policy alignment with the British Empire, highlighting the empire's strategic rivalry with Russia over European and Asian affairs.[8] However, the disastrous consequences of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, followed by World War I, the Russian Revolution and the Civil War, effectively placed the IndAsPac out of Russia's geopolitical reach until the 1950s.

The Soviet Union's short but swift campaign against imperial Japan in August 1945 allowed Moscow to not only regain territorial losses sustained as a result of the Russo-Japanese War, but also to extend its strategic reach in Asia as far as the Yellow Sea and the 38th parallel in Korea. The victorious Soviet Union began its global rise as the principal counter-pole to the US and the liberal West by supporting anticolonial and liberation movements, including across the IndAsPac. Moscow began its ambitious regional game, establishing its targeted partner networks and acquiring key allies in order to achieve and maintain strategic parity with US-led regional allied structures. Other strategic goals for the Soviets included projecting Soviet military influence in Europe, possessing capabilities greater than NATO, and exhibiting their nuclear and conventional forces in Northeast Asia to increase and improve perceptions of Soviet credibility throughout the region and among its adversaries.[9]

Contrary to Europe's Cold War geopolitical realities and fairly stable status quo, the IndAsPac geostrategic system remained highly dynamic and fluid, presenting the Soviets with a far more complex set of realities and challenges than the ones they were facing in Europe. The PRC emerged as one of the key barometers for measuring Soviet/Russian strategic behaviour in the region. By the 1960s, the cordial and intimate relationship between the two communist powers that had developed over the 1940s and 1950s changed dramatically.[10] By early 1969, they found themselves locked in a state of a near open political–military confrontation, which climaxed in March of that year over a border incident around the disputed Damanskiy Island in the Amur River. The state of confrontation was so high that the Soviet leadership was allegedly considering a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the PRC.[11]

From the mid-1960s, the Soviet strategic push into the IndAsPac was also driven by the desire to form an effective containment line against the PRC, which became a strategic priority for Moscow. The Soviets initiated the creation of a regional security framework aimed at encircling hostile China, and India and post-war Vietnam became essential elements of that framework, but the push also aimed at gaining strategic Soviet footholds along key lines of communication.

The Soviets achieved their most striking and long-lasting favourable strategic outcome in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War (1964–73), they provided invaluable military support to North Vietnam. In 1979, when the Sino-Vietnamese clash over Cambodia escalated into a war between the two nations, the Soviet front-line units deployed along the Sino-Soviet border, as well as air force, air defence (AD) and strategic nuclear force elements, were placed on full alert. The Soviet military massed a 250,000-strong combined arms operational–strategic group, posing a direct military threat to northern China, while the Soviet Pacific Fleet (SOVPAC) deployed more than 20 warships to the SCS.[12]

Soviet support for Vietnam during the 1979 war resulted in an agreement for the 25-year lease of the strategically vital Cam Ranh Bay naval and air base. Moscow regarded the acquisition of the base in May 1979 as a Soviet naval logistical support facility as a very important gain.[13] Cam Ranh was a forward staging post for SOVPAC, providing replenishment and refuelling capability for naval units on deployment in the SCS and the Indian Ocean. The base also provided gathered intelligence on maritime traffic through the SCS.[14]

The Cam Ranh base in Vietnam, almost 2,000 nautical miles (nm) away from the USSR, was the closest Soviet military base to Australia. Thus, although Canberra held a degree of interest for the Soviet Union because of Australia's close military relations with the US, Moscow's finite resources and reduced military capabilities meant that Australia wasn't high on its priority list. Furthermore, Australia (and New Zealand) were, and continue to be, signatories to the ANZUS Treaty. Pacific island nations, such as Papua New Guinea, had developed amicable diplomatic and strong defence relations with Australia. Tonga, Fiji and Western Samoa were also anti-communist and relied upon their neighbours for a range of security purposes.[15] Hence, the ability of the Soviet Union to access the Southwest Pacific was tightly limited by the coordinated actions of the ANZUS powers.

At the peak of its power, the Soviet Union deployed a formidable military standing force east of the Ural Mountains: about 500,000 personnel; approximately 20,000 armoured weapons, 15,000 artillery systems and 1,700 aircraft. SOVPAC had about 60 major surface combatants and 90 submarines.[16] That strategic concentration had a serious impact on the regional balance of forces, but it was Cam Ranh and other Soviet defence facilities across the IndAsPac that became symbols of Soviet strategic penetration of the region and the focus of growing threat perceptions of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the regional community, alongside its growing and extensive displays of its naval power. Between 1966 and 1991, SOVPAC surface combatants and submarines conducted 2,304 combat deployments, while Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation (PFNA) aircraft performed 21,220 combat sorties.[17] Units of the 10th Squadron alone (the core element of Soviet power projection capability) staged more than 200 significant long-range deployments.[18]

It was only in the mid-1980s, when SOVPAC's out-of-area activities started to decline,[19] that the perceived Soviet threat began to decrease. The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought a rapid decline in both Russia's political and economic influence and its forward military presence across the region. While formally remaining in Cam Ranh, by 1992 the Russian Navy withdrew all of its warships and military aircraft; the 17th Squadron, which had operated from Cam Ranh, was disbanded and the permanent forward naval presence in the area was abandoned.

PART 1: REGIONAL STRATEGY

Major threats and regional hotspots

Current geostrategic realities in Northeast Asia make it a very complex and potentially fragile neighbourhood. Russia has ongoing territorial disputes with the US over the Bering Sea and with Japan over the Kurils; there are other disputes between the PRC, Japan and the ROK; and high-intensity confrontation continues on the Korean peninsula. The forces of three major nuclear powers (US, Russia, China) and one undeclared minor nuclear power (North Korea) are also in the region.

Despite tensions with Washington and NATO, Russia's current strategic thinking and planning factors in a lower level of political–military confrontation with the US and its Pacific allies when compared to during the Cold War. Moscow also enjoys greatly improved relations with the PRC, which reduces its need to maintain substantial military forces along the Sino-Russian border.[20]

Regional threat assessment

Over the past three years, Russia has been demonstrating greater understanding of the evolving global threat environment. That understanding is manifested in two key doctrinal documents released by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) since 2014: the latest editions of *The military doctrine of the Russian* Federation and *The Foundations of state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of naval activity until 2030*.

The 2014 edition of the military doctrine identifies the following factors that are relevant to the IndAsPac geostrategic environment:

- the deployment (build-up) of military contingents of foreign states (and groups of states) in the areas bordering Russia, including adjacent waters
- the deployment of strategic missile defence systems; implementation of the 'global strike' concept; intention to deploy weapons in space; deployment of strategic non-nuclear systems; precision weapons
- territorial claims
- the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), missiles and missile technology
- the use of force in violation of the UN Charter and other norms of international law; conflict areas in regions bordering Russia.[21]

Section 2 of the naval policy, which was released on 20 July 2017, details Moscow's most up-to-date threat assessment relevant to the maritime domain:

- the US and its allies' desire for dominance at sea through achieving an overwhelming naval superiority, including in the Arctic
- territorial claims in the littoral
- regional naval modernisation

- economic, political, legal and military pressures on Russia, with an aim to reduce its maritime activities, including along the northern sea route through the Arctic
- the deployment of non-nuclear sea-based high-precision strategic strike systems, including seaborne antiballistic missile (ABM) elements, in proximity to Russia's territory.[22]

Subsequently, the following geostrategic factors form part of Russia's political–military calculus in the Far East and the Pacific:

- the ongoing political–military stand-off on the Korean peninsula and the risk of sudden conflict escalation
- the deployment of US ABM defence elements, including the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence system, in Japan, the ROK, Alaska and Hawaii
- the continuous qualitative modernisation of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, including their naval element (the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force)
- the combat stability (*boyevaya ustoichivost*) of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent east of the Urals
- considerable increases in the offensive capabilities of China's People's Liberation Army (Navy) (PLAN) and the qualitative leap that it has achieved over the past 20 years
- the growing strategic significance of the Arctic theatre, including the northern sea route transit corridor
- the role that Russian Pacific Fleet (RUSPAC) elements will play in the future as part of the operational–strategic command, OSK Sever
- Russia's growing strategic interests across the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre, including Antarctica.

When assessing the possibility of the country becoming engaged in a large-scale military conflict in the future, Russian strategic and defence thinkers don't rule out the possibility of a serious military conflict in the Far East and Western Pacific.[23] Several scenarios dominate ongoing debates, but prominent among them are a war between Russia and China over the Russian Far East, and a war between China and a US-led regional coalition for supremacy in the Pacific, in which Russia is indirectly involved. Neither is expected to happen in the next 10 years,[24] but these prognoses are helping to trigger a continuing Russian capability upgrade east of the Urals.

Russia's current policies are based on pragmatic conflict avoidance and non-interference in third parties' geopolitical issues, unless they're of direct importance to its strategic interests. For regional defence planning, the emphasis is on strengthening the 200–300-kilometre defence perimeter along the Pacific coast. Any large-scale military conflict that can't be neutralised by the conventional component is likely to escalate into a nuclear phase (Russia's war 'red line'), perhaps including the use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.

During the Cold War, Soviet war planning in the Far East and the Pacific remained largely defensive. The emphasis was on containing the PRC and retaining an effective outer (1,500–2,000-kilometre) maritime defensive perimeter against the US and its regional allies, although some offensive operations were planned.[25]

Since the 1990s, Russia's military strategy in the Pacific has shifted to the protection of two main defence perimeters: the open-ocean (outer) 1,500–2,000-kilometre perimeter, and the littoral (in-area) 200–300-kilometre perimeter. In the 2000s, the Russian Armed Forces (RusAF) remained preoccupied with defending the littoral defence perimeter. Russia's current maritime policy identifies the seas of Japan, Okhotsk and Bering, the northwestern Pacific Ocean and the eastern Arctic Ocean (along the northern sea route) as principal areas for its strategic maritime activities in the region.

The devaluing of large-scale long-range operations in the maritime domain can be explained by the concentration of Russia's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) operations primarily in home waters.[27] The currently operational Delta III-class SSBNs, which are equipped with 3M40 (SS-N-18 Stingray), and Borey-class SSBNs, which are equipped with 3M-30 Bulava-M (SS-NX-30) submarine-launched strategic ballistic missiles, have a firing range of 6,500–8,000 kilometres, thus allowing strategic submarine patrols in friendly littoral waters, primarily in the Sea of Okhotsk. Similarly, the reduction of the US Navy's SSBN combat patrols in the Pacific has reduced the importance of the open-ocean antisubmarine warfare (ASW) defence beyond the outer perimeter.

The targeted modernisation of Russian force elements deployed in Siberia and, in particular, the Far East aims at having an effective deployable capability to counter aerial and sea-based threats posed by conventional and unconventional cruise missiles and other long-range high precision munitions. Other short-term goals east of the Urals are physical infrastructure upgrades, including of naval bases and airfields, and improving the efficiency of elements of national mobilisation capacity in Siberia and the Far East.[28]

Protecting strategic nuclear assets, including RUSPAC's SSBNs, remains one of Moscow's most pressing concerns in the Pacific. Russia's defence experts point out that, in case of a conflict with a US-led coalition in the Pacific, RUSPAC wouldn't be able to offer guaranteed protection to friendly SSBNs operating within the Okhotsk SSBN bastion, thus making the need to accelerate RUSPAC's capability upgrade more urgent. In the meantime, existing vulnerabilities are expected to be offset by a threat of a nuclear retaliation, including in scenarios in which Russia may lose one SSBN in the Pacific to the US or Japan (Russia's war 'red line' at sea).[29]

The Kurils as a core element of Russia's defensive barrier

Since 2015, the Russian MoD has been implementing ambitious plans to bolster the country's coastal defence capability in the Pacific by introducing a comprehensive defensive layout from the southern end of the Maritime Province to the Arctic, based on a network of hardened defensive zones. This defensive network aims to impose effective control and defence over the Bering Strait, along the Kuril Islands chain and the southern approaches to the Maritime Province (that is, the principal areas of deployment and operations of RUSPAC within the immediate defensive perimeter). The introduction of this layout has become part of the Development Plan for the Eastern Military District 2016–20.[30]

The ongoing qualitative modernisation of Russia's SSBN capability deployed in the Pacific makes the strategic value of the Sea of Okhotsk higher than ever. Consequently, the protection of the Okhotsk SSBN bastion has been viewed as one of the core objectives of Russia's defensive activities in the Pacific, where the Kurils chain and Kamchatka act as key elements in enforcing effective anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) over the area as part of Russia's counter-strategy against US global strike capability.[31]

Equally, control over the Kurils is critical in countering any possible offensive against the Russian Far East. RUSPAC command continues to view the US, Japan and the ROK as principal maritime adversaries in the northwestern and western Pacific. In a situation of military confrontation with Russia, as long as Japan and the ROK are militarily linked to the US, attacks on key targets in the Russian Far East, whether by air or sea, would most likely be mounted from bases in those countries. Attack elements of the US 7th Fleet stationed in Japan and the US 3rd Fleet dispersed along America's western coast and around Hawaii, such as nuclear-powered carrier battle groups, attack submarines (including SSNs and SSGNs) and amphibious forces, would approach the Russian coastline either via the Tsushima Strait or via the Kuril chain and the Sea of Okhotsk.

As part of the development plan, the Russian military has been progressively fielding advanced coastal defence capabilities on Kamchatka and the Kurils. This has included the rearmament of the 520th Missile Brigade with the Bastion coastal missile system. In November 2016, elements of the 72nd Missile Brigade armed with the 3K55 Bastion (SSC-5 Stooge) and with 3K60 Bal (SS-C Sennight) missile systems were deployed to the Iturup and Kunashir islands, respectively.[32] Together with the rearmament of the 18th Machine-Gun Artillery (MGA) Division, the fielding of the Bastions and Bals on the Kunashir is part of Russia's regional strategy to introduce a select number of A2/AD defensive zones.[33]

In 2016 and 2017, RUSPAC staged two exploratory expeditions to Matua Island in the Kurils. It seems that among the key drivers for this are plans to establish a manoeuvre naval base on the island, which could eventually home port next-generation major surface combatants, and even play a role in Russia's plans to develop an echeloned ABM defensive layout in the Far East.[34] There are also plans to use a former Japanese military airfield as a forward operating base of the Russian Federation Air Space Force (RFASF), including elements of the Long Range Aviation (LRA) force.[35] If those plans are implemented, it will signal Russia's intent to extend its defensive barrier in the Pacific away from the littoral by gradually moving back to a two-barrier defensive layout.

As the geostrategic value of the Kurils increases for the Russians, any favourable prospects of resolution for Japan of the so-called Northern Territories dispute should be considered unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future. The most positive outcome would be joint ventures to support economic development of the southern Kurils and joint activities in their vicinity.

The Korean peninsula as a flashpoint

The ongoing crisis over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is of great and pressing concern to Moscow. From the 1940s, Pyongyang was in the orbit of Russia's regional strategic policy. In the 1990s and 2000s, despite the DPRK's drive towards the orbit of the PRC's geopolitics, Russia has retained some significant degree of influence over the regime. Moscow is ready to expand its economic trade with North Korea by a factor of ten by 2020,[36] and the energy sector is a prospective area for future trade growth. Russia and North Korea have regularly discussed the opportunities posed by oil and gas exploration in North Korea, as well as assessments for mineral deposits, rare metals and gold. However, for such trade development to occur, cooperation with South Korea would be critical to allow the effective establishment of a Northeast Asian energy network.[37] Therefore, Moscow is a potential mediator between the two Koreas for the development of such multilateral ventures, which would offset Chinese influence and migration into the Far East region.

In May 2017, the first cargo–passenger ferry service linking the ports of Rajin in Rason, North Korea, and Vladivostok commenced operations—a highly symbolic move, given the new line of sanctions that were imposed upon the DPRK following the military stand-off in April 2017.[38] However, on 16 October 2017, President Putin approved targeted sanctions again DPRK, which include the suspension of scientific and technological cooperation that can contribute to North Korea's nuclear weapons program and the detention of ships carrying suspicious cargo.[39]

The imposition of the sanctions doesn't necessarily mean a rapid change of heart towards Pyongyang. For Moscow, a stable North Korea would be an attractive environment for foreign investment to continue to increase its trade and scientific cooperation, as well as to ensure the ongoing development of the Far East, allowing Russia to act as a counterbalance to the influence of the US and the PRC in the region.[40]

There's no doubt that Russia is anxious about the behaviour of Kim Jong-un's regime and the security risks associated with such behaviour. The development and fielding of more advanced missile and nuclear capability and regular missile tests, which are often carried out near Russia's EEZ and territorial waters, forces Moscow to take steps to protect its interests and sovereignty. In fact, one of the key drivers of urgent measures to upgrade Russia's medium- to long-range AD capability in the Far East, including in the Vladivostok and Nakhodka areas, was the threat posed by the DPRK's missile program.

At the same time, Moscow strongly opposes any attempts to put military pressure on the DPRK, especially if it risks an escalation to an all-out war on the Korean peninsula.[41] Vladivostok is around 200 kilometres away from the Russia–DPRK border. In the event of a major conflict, Russia is likely to face an influx of refugees across its 17.3-kilometre land border with North Korea, or via the sea (22.1-kilometre maritime border); any attacks on Pyongyang's nuclear or other WMD facilities, or any desperate move by the regime to operationalise them in a war-fighting environment, may lead to the contamination of Russia's border regions. Moscow would end up with yet another fragile hotspot on its doorstep for many years to come.

As a result, while Russia and the PRC may be considering pressure options to contain Pyongyang, Moscow makes it clear to the US and Japan that any attempt to use force against the DPRK is likely to trigger Russia's counter response. Russia's operational activity in eastern Siberia and the Far East in April 2017, which is detailed later, can illustrate this.[42]

Russia and the South China Sea dispute

Russia has had longstanding political and military–strategic interests in Southeast Asia, including the SCS, that are driven by the following geostrategic considerations:

- the need to establish and maintain a favourable maritime security regime over the strategically important SCS, critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and choke points, through either a periodic or permanent forward naval presence (including access to local ports and harbours)
- supporting local friends and partners, also through force projection
- supporting national geo-economic interests in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Africa by keeping principal SLOCs and choke points open and secure for commercial maritime traffic
- containing regional and rival global geopolitical and military powers, also by applying pressure through power projection and area denial.

Despite a long history of territorial tensions in the SCS, Russia's position on this major regional geopolitical flashpoint remained unclear until recently. For years, Moscow tried to play a fine balancing act of non-involvement in the disputes, stating that their resolution should be limited to the parties involved and opposing any external interference.[43] Then, in September 2016, Putin made what many considered to be a striking comment. While speaking at the press conference at the conclusion of a G20 summit in Hangzhou, China, he effectively supported China's position on the SCS issue.[44]

Those remarks, which many observers considered to be sensational, came just a few weeks before large-scale Russia–China naval exercises, which were held in the area. While the active phases of the manoeuvres, codenamed Maritime Interaction 2016, were held off China's mainland, the very act of mounting joint exercises in areas adjacent to disputed sectors triggered both alarm and discussions, which were also aimed at understanding Russia's political and geostrategic motives. Many considered the staging of a joint naval exercise as yet another example of deepening Russia–China strategic relations, or what seemed to be Moscow's increasing appeasement of Beijing, as being driven by the fallout from political and economic sanctions that the West imposed on Russia in 2014–15. However, Russia's stance on the SCS disputes is driven by a suite of strategic considerations.

Putin's remarks in Hangzhou, while being taken as yet another sign of Russia–China strategic rapprochement and Moscow's growing desperation to win over Beijing at all costs against the backdrop of West-led sanctions over Ukraine, are unlikely to signal Russia's unconditional support for China's activities in the SCS, although senior Russian officials, including the President, indicate that they're sympathetic to Beijing's claims. The tone of the commentary in Russian media, including open defence sources, sides more with China, while noting that it's the actions of the US and its allies that contribute to the escalation of political–military tensions in the area. However, Russia's public support for China's strategy in the SCS is driven not just by the desire to further strategic partner relations with its largest neighbour. Two other vectors can be identified: SLOC security and the factor of Crimea.

The resumption of RUSPAC's deployments to the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, regular tours of duty to Southeast Asia and the extension of operations to the southern Pacific require not just access to logistical support facilities, such as Cam Ranh and other regional ports, but also a secure transit through the SCS, which can be guaranteed by China's power dominance over the area. The Russian economy is desperately seeking new markets to make up for losses sustained from the suspension of trade with Europe and North America. Thus, ensuring the security of critical SLOCs and choke points (the SCS is recognised as one of them) is becoming a matter of strategic priority. In the absence of sufficient spare naval capabilities that would allow the Russian Navy to patrol the area, a reliance on a favourable maritime regime provided by Russia's principal allied partner in the IndAsPac is in Moscow's interests.

The annexation of the Crimean peninsula in early 2014 (in what the Russians describe as a reunification following the people's March referendum) has created a risk of Ukraine lodging legal appeals against Russia.[45] In this context, Russia's more decisive position on the SCS dispute, and it's still measured but more open support for China, are driven by a pragmatic desire to support a legal precedent created by Beijing when it dismissed the 12 July 2016 international court ruling. If China were to succeed in withstanding international criticism and pressure to accept the ruling, Russia could then use this precedent in support of its own counterclaim against Ukraine.

Another likely point that can explain Russia's supportive remarks for China is that it wants to pressure Beijing to take a more favourable position on the status of Crimea and Russia's actions in Ukraine. Since 2014, the Russians have been very active in trying to secure China's support, or at least an open, friendly neutrality, on the status of Crimea, but without much luck. Chinese officials exercised great caution in commenting on Russia's annexation of Crimea and came up short on showing overt support of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Consequently, Putin's remarks in Hangzhou could be interpreted as a form of calculated soft pressure on his Chinese counterpart to make a reciprocal gesture on Crimea.

Cooperation and regional engagement

Russia is steadily increasing its defence cooperation throughout Asia. Under the Defence Minister, General Sergei Shoigu, Russia's MoD has intensified its international cooperation with foreign counterparts, thus making defence diplomacy one of its core priorities. Over the past five years, Russia has signed bilateral defence agreements with 26 nations.[46] In the Asia–Pacific, Russia is engaged with regional security structures such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus, the Shangri-La Dialogue and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, but is also very active in developing key bilateral ties. Moscow sees opportunities for military-technological and maritime security cooperation; peacekeeping; search and rescue; disaster relief; combating various forms of organised crime, such as piracy, narcotraffic and smuggling; and counterterrorism.

As well as developing new ties, Russia has placed particular emphasis on reanimating or intensifying defence contacts with former Soviet allies, but it doesn't limit its defence connections to its traditional partners and friends. Despite established threat perceptions of Japan and the ROK, the Russians are progressing their relations with both.

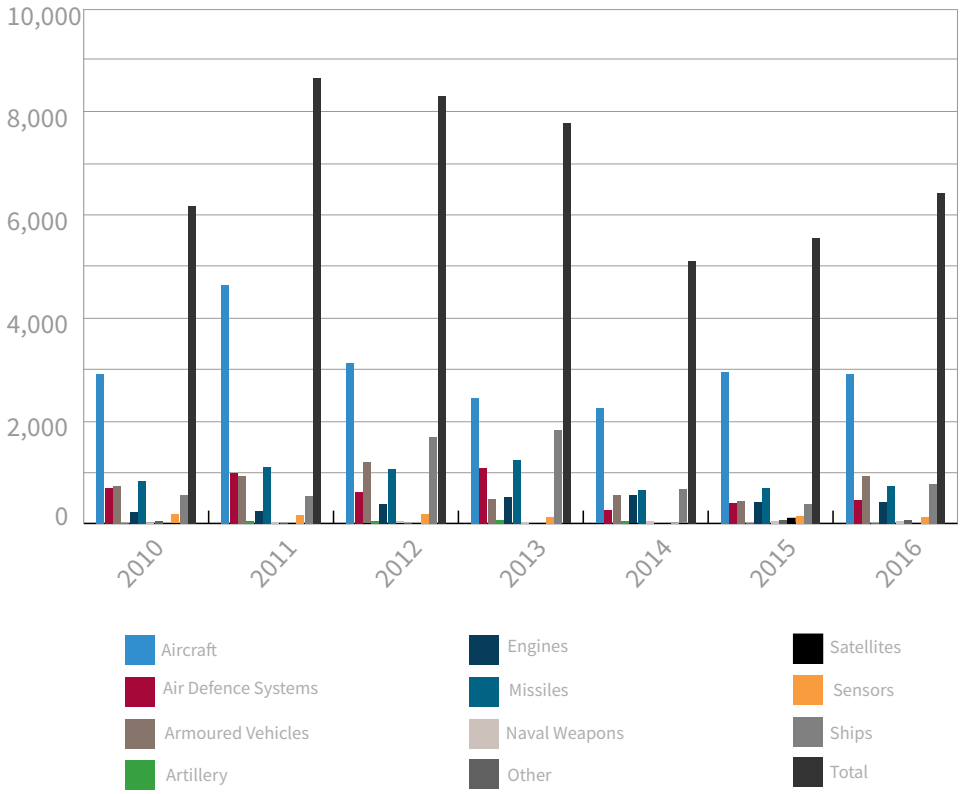
Russia and South Korea have engaged in military exchanges, port visits and visits by high-ranking military officials. In March 2012, the first defence strategic dialogue was held between the two, and their defence ministries aim to make it a regular feature in bilateral defence and political relations.[47]

Defence relations with Japan are another example of Russia's pragmatism in the field of security cooperation in the IndAsPac. For Japan, relations with Moscow remain challenging. Tokyo imposed sanctions on Russia following the crisis in Ukraine but continued defence dialogue with Moscow, including via the reanimated 2 x 2 format (foreign and defence ministers meetings). Regular consultations, including between the general staffs of both countries, are complemented by joint exercises. During the latest ministers of defence (MIN-DEF) meeting between Shoigu and Japan's Defence Minister, Tomomi Inada, in March 2017, it was announced that both countries would undertake more than 30 joint activities in 2017 alone.[48]

Strategic influence and confidence building

Established perceptions of Russia's security engagement with the Asia–Pacific continue to be largely associated with Moscow's active military–technological cooperation (that is, arms sales) with regional countries, driven by its desire to support its defence industry and maintain it as a stable income earner for the nation.[49] Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, exports of Russia's defence and dual-use technology remained an important element of its national export strategy and one of the few areas where the nation retained a competitive technological edge. Between 2011 and 2016, Russia was the world's second largest exporter of military technology and responsible for up to 25% of total arms sales (Figure 1).[50] In 2016, the value of Russia's arms exports exceeded US$15 billion (up from US$14.5 billion in 2015).[51] In mid-2017, Russia was supplying 52 countries, and foreign defence orders totalled US$50 billion.[52]

Figure 1: Russian arms exports, 2010 to 2016



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Importer/exporter TIV tables: Russia*, online.

For Russia, military–technological cooperation goes well beyond commercial domestic interests, such as supporting indigenous defence industry and R&D, or short-term geopolitical dividends. The Russians believe that effective exports of defence technologies:

- support the country's status as a global power
- support its national foreign and strategic policy
- allow it to achieve targeted objectives in markets in key countries (including preferences in civilian commercial deals)
- allow it to obtain privileges that support its out-of-area activities (onshore logistics).

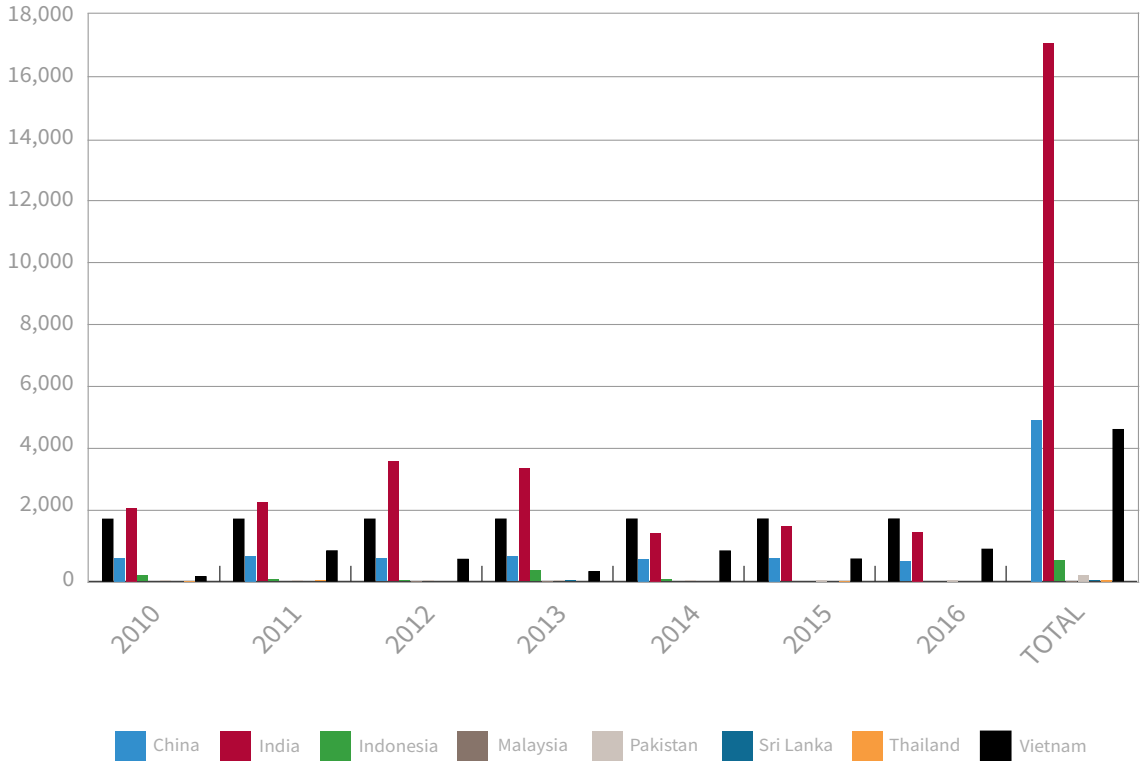
This makes military-technological cooperation one of the key factors in Russia's strategic influence (*strategicheskoe vliyanie*) in the IndAsPac region and beyond.[53]

The factor of strategic influence was highlighted during the July 2017 meeting of Russia's federal Commission on Military–Technical Cooperation with Foreign States, which was chaired by Putin. In his remarks, he emphasised the importance of the education and training of foreign defence personnel and civilians in Russia's defence institutions. Historically, Russia prioritised training for the national political and military elites of its friends and allies. Education and training are often considered to be an important element of confidence building between militaries and countries and an essential element of soft power in inter-state defence relations. In mid-2017, about 8,000 foreign personnel were training in Russia's military establishments.[54]

Between 2004 and 2013, the volume of Russia's arms exports to the IndAsPac increased by 28%, to make up 65% of the country's total exports of military technologies. Over the past five years, Russia has managed to expand its regional client network, including by securing niche positions in countries previously dominated by US or European defence companies. Countries with which Russia collaborates in military-technological sphere can be divided into three main categories:

- Tier 1 partner clients (long-term relationship; volume of cooperation): the PRC, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia
- Tier 2 partner clients (short-term or limited-scale contracts): Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore
- Tier 3 prospective or one-off contract clients: the Philippines, Fiji (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Russian arms exports to key clients in the IndAsPac, 2010 to 2016 (US million)



Source: SIPRI, *Importer/exporter TIV tables: Russia*, online.

Another important element of Russia's regional security engagement is coordination and cooperation in the maritime domain. In 2016, Russia's then Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov stated that 'Joint exercises and naval manoeuvres will improve our team-play in addressing [regional] security threats.'[55] In June 2017, Deputy Defence Minister Major-General Aleksandr Fomin stated that Moscow focuses on the development of naval cooperation in the IndAsPac in both 'multilateral and bilateral formats'.[56] Fomin's remarks at the 2017 Shangri-La Dialogue reflect core principles of Russia's strategic engagement in the Asia–Pacific. The 2015 edition of Russia's maritime doctrine (MARID-15) identifies six regional geopolitical vectors, three of which (the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Antarctic) are in the IndAsPac. An analysis of Russia's declared approaches to regional vectors identifies the following:

- Pacific regional direction: developing strategic ties with the PRC; intensification of cooperation with regional powers with respect to strengthening maritime security regime; combating piracy, narcotraffic, contraband; search and rescue at sea
- Indian Ocean regional direction: developing friendly ties with India and other regional states; international maritime cooperation.[57]

Consequently, Russia's increased naval activity across the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre can be viewed as part of Moscow's implementation of principal postulates outlined in MARID-15 (Appendix, Table A4), while supporting Russia's push to expand its strategic influence across the region.

At the same time, Russia's declared emphasis on cooperation indicates that confidence building is high on its regional security agenda. Developing close and trusted relations with regional militaries is being pursued through consultations, exchanges, regular joint exercises (Peace Mission and Naval Interaction with the PRC, INDRA with India, Selenga with Mongolia, SAREX with Japan, and others), and a relatively new form of Russia-led international defence partner engagement—the International Army Games (ArMI). In 2017, more than 3,500 defence personnel from 29 countries took part in ArMI-2017, including teams from Fiji, India, Laos, Mongolia, the PRC and Thailand.[58]

The China vector

On 4 July 2017, Putin met with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, in Moscow for the 23rd time since both leaders came to power. Russia's strategic rapprochement with China is one of the major geopolitical developments in the Asia–Pacific. The extent of Sino-Russian defence cooperation in recent years shows that the two nations have stepped closer to one another, although they have stopped short of formally calling each other allies.

There's no doubt that the September 2016 joint naval exercises in the SCS signalled the special nature of Sino-Russian defence cooperation, which has evolved from limited military technology transfers to a fully grown defence partnership. Also without a doubt, the military–technological factor remains a big part of Sino-Russian defence cooperation: by late 2016, defence contracts with the PRC totalled US$8 billion, or 16% of Russia's entire defence export portfolio, and the share of Russia's defence technology in PLAN inventory increased from 43% in 2012 to 64% in 2016.[59]

However, bilateral defence relations aren't limited to the transfer of advanced Russian technology or the old Soviet surplus of armaments, ammunition and spare parts. Another important element is practical cooperation between the two nations' militaries, which ranges from visits of personnel and warships to joint military training, including exercises, the training of staff in educational military establishments (PLA cadets and officers in Russia), joint overseas operations, and the exchange of sensitive data and intelligence sharing.

In April 1996, the two governments signed and ratified a long-term contract for Russian training of Chinese personnel. A more robust political–military dialogue began taking shape. Exchanges of military delegations and invitations to each other's defence observers to attend local military exercises became routine. The dialogue also included a suite of political gestures aimed at furthering confidence-building measures and improving transparency in strategic relations, particularly following the signing of the 2001 Treaty of Friendship.[60]

The following year, Moscow made a highly symbolic decision: to withdraw from Cam Ranh. The strategic rationale was twofold. Less than a year after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Putin was sending signals to then US President George W Bush that Russia was considering the US as a partner in the Global War on Terror, and that by abandoning its last forward posts from the Cold War it was prepared to shift away from strategic rivalry with Washington.[61] Another political signal was intended for Beijing: by closing a naval station and a SIGINT facility in Cam Ranh, Moscow was indicating that it was no longer engaged in containing China, including in the field of intelligence sharing with Vietnam.[62]

In parallel to bilateral and multinational Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Peace Mission exercises, Russia is developing close operational ties with the PLAN, as declared in the revised MARID-15. Intensive exercise activity, port calls and joint operations have become essential elements in implementing this strategic vision. The first major display of joint operations at sea was in late August 2005, when Moscow and Beijing staged a large-scale bilateral exercise, Peace Mission 2005, in the Yellow Sea.[63]

In 2009, both the Russian and Chinese navies committed assets in support of international counter-piracy operations near the Horn of Africa.[64] During joint counter-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean, the Russian and Chinese militaries were operating side-by-side in a near combat environment for the first time in the recent history of the two powers.

The next significant step in improving operational interoperability and demonstrating a common maritime security agenda was the launch of regular Naval Interaction exercise series, a now annual large-scale naval exercise. During both exercises, Russian and Chinese naval groups departed from standard non-allied foreign naval forces exercise routine (communications, search-and-rescue and other drills). Instead, the size of forces committed by both sides, the composition of joint task groups and the situational scenarios played in exercises from 2012 to 2017 (such as offensive and defensive naval operations, tactical air defence (AD), surface action and anti-submarine warfare (ASW)) suggest that RUSPAC and the PLAN were practising coalition-type operations in the maritime domain in support of a common security agenda in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.[65] It came as no surprise that in January and February 2014 Russian and Chinese warships engaged in the first joint combat naval operation in the history of their bilateral defence relationship, escorting special vessels that were transporting Syrian chemical warfare munitions to European ports.

Multilevel exercise activity is a key element of bilateral defence cooperation, particularly for the PRC. Chinese military officers value opportunities to interact with their Russian counterparts, as this allows them to operate alongside an experienced military force on land, in the air and at sea. In May 2016, both nations engaged in computer simulations concerning joint ABM operations.[66] The sensitive nature of this strategic exercise underlined the growing mutual confidence between the two militaries and the will to develop an allied approach in bilateral relations. This was highlighted by the agreement between the two MoDs in June 2017 to sign and ratify a 'road map' for deeper defence cooperation to 2020, which may indicate a push towards the formalisation of alliance relations.[67] The Russian and Chinese militaries are planning to hold another strategic ABM computer simulation exercise in late 2017.

India and Pakistan

One of the clear signs of the effectiveness of Russia's defence diplomacy in Asia was a rapid development of partner relations with Pakistan. Since the Cold War and the invasion of Afghanistan, Moscow had seen Pakistan as one of its core political–military rivals in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. In the early 2000s, then Pakistani President Pervez Musharaf initiated a dialogue with Russia, including in the security and defence fields. In November 2014, Defence Minister Shoigu visited Pakistan—the first visit of this kind since 1969. The outcome of the visit was the signing of a defence cooperation agreement that allows an expansion of bilateral defence ties, including an intensification of military-technological cooperation.[68] That cooperation may be particularly important to Pakistan, as it would allow direct access to key Russian defence technologies such as RD-93 aircraft engines, which Pakistan uses in its JF-17 aircraft. Under the agreement, Russian warships have gained access to Pakistani ports, which has resulted in a number of port calls since 2014 (Appendix, Table A4). In September and October 2016, Russia and Pakistan staged their first joint military exercise, Friendship 2016, which was held near Islamabad.[69] A year later, the second Friendship exercise was held in southern Russia, indicating that joint training will be a regular feature in the bilateral defence relationship.[70] The militaries established regular contacts involving their general staffs.

Burgeoning security and defence ties between Russia and Pakistan caused serious concern in neighbouring India, which for decades was Russia's privileged strategic partner in South Asia. For example, India was one of the key importers of Russia's military technology, at times reaching up to 42% of Russia's total arms exports. Despite growing security and defence ties with the US, Japan and Australia, and booming military-technological cooperation with Europe and Israel, India continues its extensive procurement of Russia's advanced weaponry. On 15 October 2016, during Putin's visit to New Delhi, Russia and India signed a new agreement worth about US$10.5 billion.[71]

Despite India's strategic rapprochement with the US and other Western countries, and Russia's close relations with the PRC and now Pakistan, both nations continue to value the strategic importance of the long-term trusted relationship and their ongoing confidence in each other. That confidence is highlighted by joint capability development programs such as the BrahMos cruise missile and a fifth-generation tactical aircraft. The lease of a strategic platform (Akula II class INS *Charka II* SSN) speaks of the high level of trust that Moscow has in New Delhi, which India is unlikely to compromise in the foreseeable future.

India was one of few countries that did not condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine. On the contrary, on 9 May 2015, an Indian military unit took part in the 75th anniversary Victory Parade in Red Square in Moscow—a highly symbolic move by New Delhi. Similarly, Moscow continues to view India as its strategic anchor in the Indian Ocean, which is also highlighted in MARID-15. In late June 2017, the Russian and Indian MoDs signed a road map for closer defence and military-technical ties, signalling that close cooperation and coordination in the security and defence field will continue.[72] The Russian and Indian militaries are engaged in regular land exercises and INDRA naval exercises. From 19 to 27 October 2017, the two militaries' annual Exercise INDRA included practising simultaneous joint operations on land, at sea and in the air—a sign of a deepening tactical and operational connectivity between them.[73]

Defence cooperation with Vietnam and the rest of ASEAN

The cases of India and Pakistan indicate that the Russian political–military leadership is trying to play a delicate balancing game in the region. Burgeoning Russia–China strategic relations, particularly in defence, don't mean that Moscow has taken a Soviet-style zero sum game approach to the IndAsPac geopolitical system. Russia's 'eastern' strategy is driven by a pragmatic multivectoral approach aimed at developing closer strategic dialogues with a suite of regional players and institutions, while considering the PRC as its privileged allied partner. One prime example is the progress in Russia–ASEAN security and defence dialogue over the past few years, which is another important vector of Russia's regional approach aimed at increasing both strategic influence and confidence building through cooperation in Southeast Asia.

In recent years, Moscow has shown a strong willingness to rebuild close strategic ties with its old regional ally, Vietnam. Since 2009, following the historic visit of Russia's then President Dmitry Medvedev, Moscow has emphasised strengthening its comprehensive strategic dialogue with Hanoi. In the following years, apart from intensifying economic cooperation, Russia and Vietnam resumed close defence cooperation. Since 1994, Moscow has been actively involved in modernising the Vietnamese military, especially the navy and the air force, and Vietnam has once again become one of the major recipients of Russia's advanced military technology (Figure 2).[74]

The Russian Navy has resumed regular port calls to Cam Ranh Bay and Danang (Appendix, Table A4), but on preferential terms.[75] It isn't clear whether Russia intends to reanimate its formal presence in Cam Ranh (similarly to what it did in Tartus in Syria), to make Cam Ranh a formal logistical enabler for the Russian Navy and the RFASF, or to reopen a SIGINT station at the base. However, what's certain is that Cam Ranh may once again become not just an indicator of Russia's resumed strategic presence in the SCS and Southeast Asia but a point of a potential geopolitical friction between Beijing, Moscow and Hanoi. This will very much depend both on the future strategic relationship between Russia and China and on the position of Vietnam, which has become an active and effective regional player.

One of Russia's leading contemporary geopolitical theoreticians, Sergei Kortunov, has noted that accelerating efforts towards comprehensive political-military cooperation with Vietnam and other ASEAN members is in Russia's immediate and longer term interests.[76] The realisation of this vision is evident through now regularised Russia–ASEAN defence dialogue. In the 1990s and 2000s, Russia was very active in developing robust security and defence cooperation with a number of ASEAN member states. Besides Vietnam, Moscow has built or revived robust links with Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand[77] and, more recently, the Philippines.

The case of the Philippines is a good example of Russia's attempts to diversify its strategic and defence dialogue with ASEAN members. Historically, the Philippines remained in the orbit of the US's Asia–Pacific foreign and defence policy, positioning it as a launch pad for US military power in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War. Throughout the 1990s, Moscow and Manila were engaged in a steady but relatively low-level dialogue that didn't lead to any major breakthroughs in the economic, political or security fields. Over recent years, that situation began to change. Russia's active re-engagement with Southeast Asia and the intensification of its dialogue with ASEAN members brought some deepening of bilateral links, which have been taken to a new level under the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte.

In 2016, Manila began closer and more targeted defence consultations, which resulted in a visit to Moscow by a high-profile delegation from the Philippines. In the first half of 2017, RUSPAC staged several port visits to Manila (Appendix, Table A4), some of which Duterte attended. In late May 2017, Duterte visited Moscow and signed eight major agreements with Russia, including on defence cooperation,[78] which may result in the placing of major defence orders. It's too early to assume that the Philippines considers Russia as a long-term strategic partner, let alone a security guarantor, but it's clear that Manila doesn't view Moscow as a regional destabiliser and is prepared to grow political and security dialogue, which is likely to include consultations on the SCS.

Russia has taken both bilateral and multilateral approaches in formalising its deeper security and defence relationship with ASEAN. On 26 April 2016, Shoigu hosted the first informal Russia–ASEAN MIN-DEF meeting in Moscow. Held just a few weeks prior to the anniversary of the Russia–ASEAN Summit in Sochi, the Moscow MIN-DEF meeting set up a mutually agreed agenda for short- to medium-term cooperation, including on counterterrorism, WMD proliferation, search and rescue at sea, and military medicine.[79] One of the outcomes of the meeting was an agreement for Russia's deeper defence engagement with the region. This includes joint exercise activities and becoming one of the key partners in the new ASEAN Centre of Military Medicine, which was launched in Thailand on 7 April 2016.

The RusAF has also taken part in a number of targeted engagements with ASEAN member states, alongside its regularised port calls and operations in the SCS and nearby areas. In May and September 2016, RUSPAC units took part in two joint exercises with ASEAN counterparts.[80] Both exercises drew Russian naval capability into the area and allowed for deeper engagement with regional militaries.

In 2017, the security and defence dialogue with ASEAN continued with a MIN-DEF meeting in Manila on 23–25 October.[81]

Over the past 10 years, Russia has intensified its strategic engagement with the IndAsPac community, and defence diplomacy has played a growing and more visible role than in the past. Despite continued scepticism about Russia's intent and capacity to re-establish itself as an active Pacific power, Moscow was able to deepen strategic and defence ties with a number of regional players. Pakistan and the Philippines are the most obvious examples of Russia's recent successes.

The most serious concern in the region is the prospect of a formal military alliance between Russia and the PRC, which would certainly transform the global geostrategic landscape. However, contrary to some assumptions, the Russians don't use a zero sum game approach in their broader IndAsPac strategy. There's no doubt that deepening closer strategic ties with China remains at the core of Russia's Asia strategy. Moscow needs a friendly, neutral China in support of its geopolitical game in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, as well as its comeback in the Asia–Pacific. Similarly, there should be no doubt that China needs a friendly, neutral Russia to realise its regional and global ambitions.

Russia's preoccupation with the PRC doesn't preclude it from being actively involved with other regional players, perhaps as a strategic safety measure. Russia's strategic rapprochement with Vietnam and its growing defence ties with other ASEAN member states can certainly be viewed as part of Moscow's 'over the horizon' strategy of forming a club of regional powers that could support Russia in containing China in the longer run, should relations between the two neighbouring nuclear powers deteriorate again. That may be the case, as Russian suspicion about China's future actions and memories of the violent Sino-Russian confrontation in the Far East in the late 1960s and 1970s certainly remain strong.

For now, Russia's approach gives it some space for geopolitical manoeuvring and may pay dividends if Moscow manages to persuade regional players about its potential role as a crisis mediator. In the longer run, it may also give Russia an option of revisiting the Soviet-era approach to containing China, should that be necessary.

PART 2: MEANS AND ENDS

Land and air power

Over the past 31 years, Russia's defence posture east of the Urals has undergone radical transformation. Between 1986 and 1991, Soviet military strength in the area was reduced by more than 200,000 troops, several thousand items of artillery and main battle tanks and more than 350 fixed-wing aircraft and multi-role helicopters, and the combined-arms army group stationed in Mongolia began a withdrawal.[82] Post-Soviet Russia had neither the means nor the political will to sustain a sizeable military posture in the country's east. Improved relations with the US and China reduced geopolitical risks to the Russian Far East. Similarly, increased military risks along the southern and southwestern perimeter of the collapsed Soviet Union made those areas more of a priority for Boris Yeltsin's government. By 1999, Russian forces in the then Transbaikal, Siberian and Far Eastern military districts were down to 15 active divisions (190,000 personnel); about 600 surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) deployed in the area were taken out of operational service and destroyed.[83]

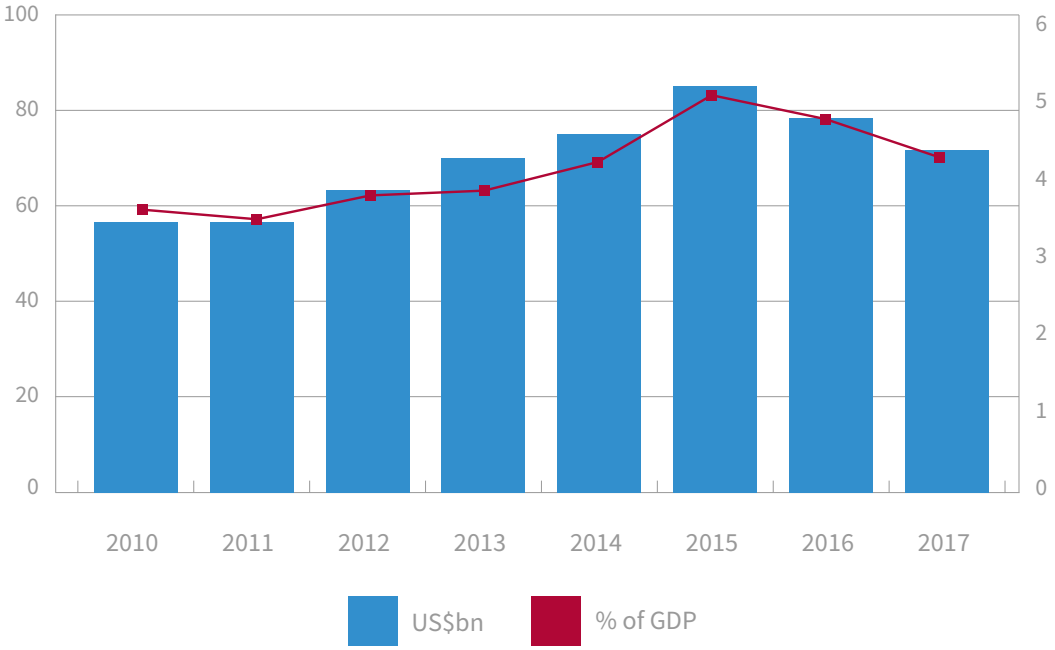
'We are stronger now than any potential aggressor'

In late December 2016, while addressing senior command staff of the RusAF, President Putin made a memorable remark: 'We still have lots to do, but we can say with certainty: we are stronger now than any potential aggressor. Anyone!'[84] What may have seemed an exaggerated claim that Russia was the world's leading military power was more of a confirmation that it had narrowed the once wide capability gap with the leading Western nations, perhaps to a point where an open confrontation might have an open-ended outcome.

In the 2000s, the Russian military began gradually rebuilding its fallen combat potential. Under Putin's leadership, the once cash-strapped national military machine received a massive financial boost and, more importantly, full political support, which remains unchanged to date. From 2013 to 2016, during the strongest phase of capability upgrades and new weapons acquisitions, Russia's total defence expenditure exceeded 4% of national GDP (Figure 3). Over that period, Moscow became the world's third largest defence spender after the US and the PRC. In Europe, Russia has remained the largest defence spender as well as the largest buyer of major combat systems: fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft; armoured vehicles, including main battle tanks; tactical missiles (SSMs and SAMs); warships (major surface combatants and submarines); and radars.[85]

Success was not achieved overnight. Earlier state armaments programs were poorly funded and managed. In the early 2000s, the Russians had to overcome the problem of depleted defence manufacturing capability, broken supply chains, inefficiencies in managing national defence orders, and the need to spend more on socio-economic aspects such as salaries, defence housing and recruitment. Consequently, the arms modernisation program produced modest results. Between 2007 and 2011, the RusAF received, among other items, 151 aircraft, 217 main battle tanks, and two warships.[86]

Figure 3: Russia's total defence expenditure, 2010–17 (US$ billion, % GDP)



Sources: 'Russia's defence spending: the impact of economic contraction', *Military Balance Blog*, International Society for the Systems Sciences (IISS), 2017, online; J Cooper, 'Military expenditure in Russia's draft federal budget for 2017 and plan years 2018 and 2019: a research note', *Military Balance Blog*, IISS, 29 October 2016, online; IMF World Economic Outlook Database, October 2016.

The principal goal of the current State Armaments Program until 2020 (SAP-20) is to achieve a qualitative leap by rearming all fighting services of the RusAF. The aim is to upgrade at least 70% of operational inventory. From 2012 until early 2017, the RusAF received 1,300 aircraft, 4,700 armoured vehicles (main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, armoured personnel carriers), and more than 50 warships—a grand total of 30,000 new and upgraded armaments and items of heavy military equipment.[87]

It would be optimistic to conclude that the Russian military, while enjoying what seems to be unconditional support from the President, is immune to any challenges or geopolitical and economic turbulence experienced by the country. Over the past two years, under Shoigu's leadership, the RusAF has had to both fight to maintain this substantial financial boost and to compromise. For example, some costly defence initiatives were delayed, including the fielding of the 5th-generation Su-57 tactical aircraft and the production of the new-generation ocean-going Lider-class guided missile battle destroyer (Project 23560) and the next-generation Shtorm-class aircraft carrier (Project 23000). Another contributing factor was the economic fallout from the sanctions regime imposed upon Russia following the 2014 Ukraine crisis. However, the intermediate impact of the ongoing SAP-20 has been new Russian military power, which has demonstrated its efficiency, effectiveness and lethality in Crimea and Syria and in an ever-growing number of exercises and forward deployments, including across the IndAsPac.

Upgrading the defence posture east of the Urals

The large-scale capability upgrade has resulted in the steady supply of new and modernised military hardware to all Russian military districts, including in the country's eastern regions, although the pace of the capability upgrades there is lower compared with similar trends in the western military districts. While further numerical reductions continued, some notable attempts were made to optimise both the organisational structure and the inventory of operational military equipment to create smaller but more mobile and autonomous combat groups.

In peacetime, the principal tasks of Russian ground, air and air defence forces stationed in the area are limited to mainly passive defensive roles:

- targeted area protection and defence along the Sino-Russia border
- anti-amphibious and anti-air assault defence along the coast of the Maritime Province (Far East), Sakhalin Island, the Kurils chain and Kamchatka
- layered AD of key industrial areas, population centres and principal defence installations.

Besides performing traditional conventional roles, Russian military power east of the Urals plays an essential role in national strategic deterrence by maintaining formidable strategic and tactical nuclear capabilities in the area. According to open-source data, in 2017 the land-based strategic deterrent component east of the Urals consisted of the 33rd Guards Missile Army, which is made up of four missile divisions (the 29th, 35th, 39th and 62nd) with about 100 launchers, primarily equipped with RS-24 Yars (SS-29) and RS-12M Topol (SS-25 Sickle) mobile intercontinental ballistic missile systems capable of delivering up to 350 nuclear warheads. The airborne component comprises a recently reinstated heavy bomber division, based at the Ukrainka air base, with about 36 Tu-95MS Bear H missile-carrying aircraft with a payload of up to 100 air-launched cruise missiles, and about 40 Tu-22M3 Backfire M intermediate range strike aircraft based at the Belaya air base (Figure 4). The naval component in the area has five nuclear-powered Borey- and Delta III-class SSBNs with 80 launchers on board (up to 366 deliverable nuclear warheads), home ported at the Rybachiy submarine base near Viluichinsk on the Kamchatka peninsula.[88]

Figure 4: Russian Military Power in Eastern Siberia and the Far East

With an exception of elements of the strategic deterrent forces, all military formations of the ground forces, the air force and RUSPAC based in the area are subordinated to the Eastern Military District / Operational–Strategic Command East (OSK Vostok). Today, the Eastern Military District is Russia's single largest RusAF's area command; it's responsible for the protection and defence of 44% of the country's territory. In late-2017, the numerical strength of forces deployed under OSK Vostok exceeded 130,000 active personnel.

Adding to the military component, OSK Vostok is supported by ground, marine and air elements of the Russian national guard (*Rosgvardiya*) and the Border Guard Service; police and civil defence units of the Ministry for Emergency Situations or EMERCOM.

From 2013 to 2015, the Eastern Military District progressively received about 2,800 items of new and upgraded military equipment (more than 1,500 items in 2013, about 400 in 2014 and more than 850 in 2015).[89] According to Military District Commander Colonel-General Sergei Sidorkin, the proportion of modern and advanced armaments and equipment in the inventory of the district's forces rose to 31% by early 2016.[90]

In 2016, the Russian military acquired approximately 5,600 items of new and modernised military equipment,[91] which allowed the complete rearmament of five major military formations (at the division and brigade levels) and 17 smaller military units.[92] Out of those, the Eastern Military District received 723,[93] including more than 60 new and modernised aircraft (Su-35S, Su-34, Su-30SM, Ka-52, Mi-8AMTSH and others); upwards of 100 main pieces of artillery and one missile brigade package (51 items); about 50 AD systems, including the S-400 Triumpf, Tor-M2U and Pantsir-S; more than 20 unmanned aerial vehicles; and 20 3K55 Bastion coastal defence missile systems.

By way of comparison, Russia's significantly smaller Southern Military District, which is responsible for operations in the country's most geopolitically fragile southwestern strategic zone (including the Transcaucasus and Ukraine) received more than 1,400 pieces of new and upgraded military equipment.[94] Russia's immediate operational requirements in the country's western and southwestern operational zones, driven by the ongoing crisis with Ukraine, the need to fortify the Crimean peninsula, the mounting political–military stand-off with NATO in the Baltic and Black seas, and the ongoing need to sustain the Syria campaign, meant that the Eastern Military District was given secondary priority.

In 2017, the Eastern Military District received more than 1,100 items of new and modernised equipment. By 1 December 2017, the Russian MoD aimed to form, reorganise and redeploy 70 units and formations of OSK Vostok.[95]

The re-equipment and the ongoing structural reorganisation, including the deployment of new combat and logistical support units, have already provided Russia with an enhanced fighting capability and the capability for limited power projection across the IndAsPac.

The RusAF is working towards the gradual introduction of an all-volunteer ('contract') force in the Eastern Military District and RUSPAC. In 2015, more than 22,000 service personnel signed contracts to serve in the district, allowing for more than seven major units and military formations to be fully staffed.[96] The target for 2016 (recruitment of about 25,000 contract personnel and an aim to staff an additional three major military units) was achieved. In 2017, over 10,000 additional personnel signed contracts.[97] The active recruitment of professorial soldiers between 2015 and 2017 (about 60,000) allowed to meet current operational and staffing requirements.

The ground forces

Given the geographical expanse of the Eastern Military District, OSK Vostok oversees the single largest concentration of army groupings in the RusAF. Ground units assigned to the district are organised in four army groups (the 5th, 29th, 35th and 36th) and one independent army corps (the 68th)—some 47 brigades (infantry, tank, missile, artillery, airborne troops and special forces, engineering and logistics, including reserves), one independent MGA division, some four various purpose regiments, and other units, with a total estimated standing force of about 90,000 active personnel (Table 1, Figure 4). Among other significant formations capable of engaging in ground support and special

operations are the 107th (Vladivostok) and the 111th (Khabarovsk) brigades of the Russian national guard; the *Taifun* special forces centre (over 1,000 personnel); OMON and SOBR tactical response police units.

Over the past four years, the MoD has continued working on improving the manoeuvrability and reach of forces stationed in Siberia and the Far East. It aims to have a sufficient and effective deployable combat element, which would allow Russia to fight on the ground and in the air until the arrival of reinforcements from the country's west. For example, by the end of 2016, the Eastern Military District had 20 deployable combat-ready battalion tactical groups,[98] which would allow the area command to respond to a limited regional contingency without waiting for forces arriving from other military districts.[99]

The ongoing force modernisation involves the fielding of new weapons systems and heavy equipment and the reactivation of platforms and systems from the existing arms inventory by assigning them to operational units from army depots and preservation bases (*bazy khraneniya*). For example, in 2016 some units of the 35th Army (Amur Province) were re-equipped with BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, replacing obsolete BMP-1s.[100] Similarly, the 18th MGA Division, stationed in the Kurils, received a full complement of T-80BM main battle tanks, which have replaced obsolete T-55Ms.

Critical analysis of the rearmament and re-equipment patterns in Siberia and the Far East over the past five years suggests that the priority is given to army formations responsible for defensive operations along the Sino-Russian border (the 5th, 35th and 36th armies) and units assigned to the 68th Independent Corps, which is responsible for the defence of Sakhalin Island and the Kurils. RUSPAC's coastal defence and rapid reaction force elements receive the same priority. Acquisition trends point to two priority areas for capability upgrades in the land force element of the Eastern Military District: significantly bolstering tactical high-precision and suppressive firepower capability, and improving the force's manoeuvring capability by increasing its mobility.

Table 1: Russian ground force elements of the Eastern Military District, October 2017

Order of battle		
Forces, by role		
Command	4 army HQs (5th, 29th, 35th, 36th); 1 corps HQ (68th)	
Airborne troops	2 airborne (VDV) brigades (11th and 83rd)	
Special forces	1 special forces (*spetsnaz*) brigade (14th)	
Manoeuvre	Armoured	1 tank brigade (5th)
	Mechanised	10 motor-rifle brigades
Defence	Coastal defence (army)	1 MGA division (18th)
Surface-to-surface missiles	4 SRBM/GLCM brigades with Iskander-M/K (3rd, 20th, 103rd and 107th)	
Air defence	4 AD brigades (8th, 35th, 71st and 140th)	
Combat support	4 artillery brigades 1 multiple rocket launcher brigade 1 NBC brigade 1 electronic warfare brigade 4 NBC regiments	
Combat service support	10 logistics brigades, 2 regiments	
Reserves		
Forces, by role		
Manoeuvre	Mechanised	8 motor-rifle brigades

Sources: *The military balance 2017*, IISS; *Defence of Japan 2016*; *RIA Novosti* (issues 2016–17), *TASS* (issues 2016–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2016–17); data collected by the author.

The most noticeable acquisitions of the Eastern Military District over the period from 2013 to 2017 were as follows:

- More than 160 T-72B2 main battle tanks allowed a complete re-equipping of armoured units in four motor-rifle brigades.
- Three tactical missile brigades were re-equipped with the Iskander-M advanced SSM system (the 107th in 2013, the 103rd in 2015 and the 20th in 2016), including missile launchers and logistical units.
- Artillery units of the 5th and 35th armies received more than 20 122-mm 9K51M Tornado-G multiple rocket launchers, 24 152-mm 2S5 Giatsint-S self-propelled heavy howitzers, an unspecified number of 203-mm 2S7M7M Malka super heavy howitzers (the 165th artillery brigade), and more than 10 240-mm 2S4 Tiulpan super heavy mortars assigned to the 305th artillery brigade (2015–16).[101]
- Artillery and engineering units of all four armies of the Eastern military district began receiving 152-mm 2S19 M2 Msta-S self-propelled heavy howitzers and advanced TOS-1A Solntsepek self-propelled heavy flamethrowers (2017).[102]
- The district's forces received 800 new wheeled trucks and heavy vehicles, including URAL-4320 and KAMAZ 5350 Mustang new-generation trucks and other vehicles (2013, 2015, 2017).[103]
- Reconnaissance and special operations units received advanced BTR-82 armed personnel carriers, Tigr-M, Taifun and UAZ Patriot special reconnaissance vehicles (2014, 2017).
- Combat support units received several hundred pieces of new equipment, among them about 100 nuclear, biological and chemical warfare defence mobile platforms; over 130 new-generation communication/signals systems; Sopka 2 radars; Krasukha and Borisoglebsk electronic counter measures systems (2016, 2017).[104]

In 2016 and 2017, qualitative upgrades are being combined with the gradual quantitative expansion of standing Russian forces deployed east of the Urals, including through the formation of new combat and support units (Appendix, Table A1). Other plans include full upgrades of several operational formations. For example, the 70th Independent Motor-Rifle Brigade of the 5th Army is scheduled to receive more than 180 items of new heavy armament and equipment and will be fully staffed with contract personnel by 2020.[105]

Other key units of the Eastern Military District are also expected to be fully rearmed and re-equipped. In 2015, it was announced that the 5th Tank Brigade will receive more than 500 new items of armament and heavy equipment, which should increase its overall combat potential by 1.6 times.[106] The full rearmament of the only armoured formation assigned to the Eastern Military District may mean a reorganisation of the 5th Brigade into a full armoured division. The practice of forming tank divisions and a tank army in Russia's Western and Central military districts, with the aim of establishing potent shock elements in main theatres of operations, may well be extended to the Far East.[107] If the 5th Brigade is to be reorganised into an armoured division, Russian offensive capability in the district would receive a significant boost in firepower and manoeuvre capabilities.

The new State Armaments Program 2018–27 (SAP-27) will have a strong emphasis on the rearmament and re-equipment of land forces and airborne troops, and the Eastern Military District is likely to be one of its principal beneficiaries.[108] The new-generation equipment that the RusAF expects to receive by 2026 includes the T-14 Armata main battle tank, T-15 Kurganets tracked infantry fighting vehicle, Bumerang wheeled armoured personnel carrier, and S-500 Prometei long-range AD systems. The Western and Southern military districts will continue to receive substantial quantities of new military hardware, but by then ageing equipment of units deployed in eastern Siberia and the Far East will need to be replaced. Plans are in place for the Kurganets and Bumerang platforms, and other systems are likely to follow.[109]

Air space and air defence element

Russia's air capability in the Eastern Military District is the key tactical and long-range striking element of Russian military power east of the Urals. Its primary peacetime and wartime missions include achieving and maintaining air superiority; delivering effective air-to-ground support, including against maritime targets; strategic strike (LRA); multi-echeloned AD of key strategic assets and main population and industrial centres; long-range patrol, surveillance and strike; theatre-to-theatre and out-of-area transport operations; reconnaissance and electronic countermeasures; search and rescue; and environmental monitoring.[110]

Table 2: Air power and air defence elements of the Eastern Military District, October 2017

Air Space Force (11th Air Force an Air Defence Army)			
Forces, by role			
Strategic bombers	4 regiments with 36 Tu-95MS Bear H, 40 Tu-22M3 Backfire M		
Fighter ground attack	1 regiment with MiG-31BM Foxhound; Su-27SM Flanker; SU-30M2; Su-30SM; Su-35S Flanker		
	1 regiment with Su-24M/M2 Fencer; Su-30SM		
	1 regiment with Su-25 Frogfoot; Su-30SM		
Ground attack	1 regiment with Su-24M/M2 Fencer; Su-34 Fullback		
	1 regiment with Su-25SM Frogfoot		
ISR	1 regiment with Su-24MR Fencer E		
Transport	2 squadrons with An-12 Cub/An-26 Curl/Tu-134 Crusty/Tu-154 Carless		
Attack helicopter	1 squadron with Mi-24P Hind		
	2 squadrons with Ka-52A Hokum B		
Transport helicopter	4 squadrons with Mi-8 Hip/Mi-26 Halo		
Air defence	3 brigades with 9K317 Buk-M1-2/M2 (SA-11 Gadfly / Sa-17 Grizzly); S-300V (SA-12 Gladiator/Giant) 1 brigade with 9K37M3 Buk-M3		
	3 regiments with S-300PS (SA-10B Grumble); 2-300PM (SA-20 Gargoyle)		
	2 regiments with S-400 (SA-21 Growler); 96K6 Pantsir-S1 (SA-22 Greyhound)		
Equipment, by type			
Aircraft	FTR	17 MiG-31BM/BSM Foxhound	
	FGA	116 total	
		23 SU-27SM Flanker 6 Su-30M2 29 Su-30SM 24 Su-34 Fullback 34 Su-35S Flanker	
	ATK	142 total	
		32 Su-24M Fencer 10 Su-24M2 Fencer 72 Su-25/Su-25SM Frogfoot	
	ISR	28 Su-24MR Fencer E	
	TPT	24 total	
		22 An-12 Cub/An-26 Curl 1 Tu-134 Crusty 1 Tu-154 Careless	
Helicopters	ATK	36 total	
		24 Ka-52A Hokum B 12 Mi-24P Hind	
	TPT	67+ total	
		Heavy	7 Mi 26 Halo
		Medium	60+ Mi-8 Hip
Air sefence – SAM	Long-range	S-300PS (SA-10 Grumble) S-300V (SA-12 Gladiator/Giant) S-400 (SA-21 Growler)	
	Medium-range	9K317 Buk-M1-2 (SA-11 Gadfly) 9K317 Buk-M2 (SA-17 Grizzly) 9K37M3 Buk-M3	
	Short-range	96K6 Pantsir-S1 (SA-22 Greyhound)	
Airborne troops			
Forces, by role			
Manoeuvre	Air manoeuvre	2 air assault brigades	

Sources: *The military balance 2017*, IISS; *Defence of Japan 2016*; *RIA Novosti* (issues 2016–17), *TASS* (issues 2016–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2016–17); data collected by the author.

In August 2015, RFASF elements, including area and theatre AD, which had previously formed the 3rd Air Force and Air Defence (AF/AD) Command, were reorganised in the 11th AF/AD Army,[111] which by late 2017 had more than 580 fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, including LRA and PFNA units.

RFASF units stationed in the theatre are equipped with fourth-generation-plus platforms, including MiG-31, Su-24, Su-25, Su-27, Su-30, Su-32, Su-34 and Su-35S aircraft and their variants. Russia's general staff and its regional command understand the need to achieve and maintain air superiority and deploy a multi-echeloned defensive posture against aerial targets. Air power and AD elements of the 11th AF/AD Army are responsible for defending 11 administrative regions of Russia in eastern Siberia and the Far East as well as more than 22,000 kilometres of land and maritime borders. Consequently, one of the key improvements in the regional defence posture since 2010 has been the ongoing large-scale upgrade of air power and AD capability. The impact of this qualitative transformation is even more noticeable than that of ground force and RUSPAC upgrades over that period.

A critical analysis of modernisation trends for the 11th AF/AD Army reveals that the emphasis has been on achieving and maintaining air superiority and effective airborne fire support by rearming all fighter and tactical strike aircraft units and all helicopter formations with a new line of advanced multi-role platforms. Between 2013 and 2017, the Eastern Military District received an average of around 50 new fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft each year. As a result, the RFASF was able to fully rearm major combat units of the 11th AF/AD Army:

- Between 2014 and the end of 2016, the 22nd (Central Uglovaya air base near Vladivostok) and the 23rd (Dzemgi air base, Khabarovsk region) fighter regiments of the 303rd Air Composite Division were re-equipped with Su-35S and six Su-30M2 advanced superiority aircraft (the 23rd was fully re-equipped, while the 22nd received one squadron of 14 aircraft through 2016).
- By 2015, the 120th Air Regiment (Domna air base, Transbaikal region) received 24 Su-30SMs, which replaced ageing MiG-29s.
- In 2015–16, the 575th Army Aviation (helicopter) air base (Chernigovsk, Maritime Province) and the 573rd Army Aviation air base (Khabarovsk) were re-equipped with Ka-52 Alligator and Mi-8AMTShSch Terminator multi-role helicopters (partially, in the case of the 573rd base).
- In 2016, the 277th Bomber Regiment of the 303rd Air Division (Khurba air base, near Komsomol'sk-na-Amure) received 16 Su-34 Pullback intermediate fighter-bomber aircraft.

The most significant acquisition for the 11th AF/AD Army in 2017 was eight Su-34s, which joined the 277th Bomber Regiment in May and October, raising the total number of operational Su-34s to 24.[112] In June 2017, the 303rd Division received three additional MiG-31BMs, bringing the number of upgraded MiG-31s in its order of battle to 17.[113] The army aviation units continued receiving new platforms. For example, from May to October 2017, units of the newly formed 18th Army Aviation Brigade (formerly the 573rd air base) continued to receive Mi-8AMTShSch Terminators, which are replacing earlier models of Mi-8s. In addition, in August, October and November 2017, the 18th Brigade received three new Mi-26 rotary heavy lifters.[114]

In upgrades of AD capability, a major thrust has been the fielding of new-generation medium- and long-range AD systems around principal naval bases as well as upgrades of the tactical AD capability of army units as part of the overall capability overhaul of core army formations. The most noticeable improvements include the following:

- Between 2014 and 2016, two AD regiments based near Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskaiy and Vladivostok were fully re-equipped with S-400 Triumph advanced long-range AD systems and Pantsir-S mobile short-range AD systems.
- In 2014, AD units of the 59th and 60th motor rifle brigades of the 5th Army were re-equipped with 9K331MU Tor-M2U SAMs.
- In 2015, the 18th MGA Division received Tor-M2Us.

Improvements to theatre-level AD are driven by the MoD's desire to be able to enforce A2/AD over core areas,[115] in response to either possible security risks coming from North Korea or long-term threats posed by the US and its regional allies, as well as China, to the Russian Far East.[116] Between 2017 and 2020, the rearmament of the 11th AF/AD Army will continue, although the pace may gradually slow down as the SAP-20 comes to an end.

Apart from improving and expanding its organisational structure and upgrading its inventory and strike capability, the RFASF has initiated ground infrastructure upgrades. Over the next two years, the RusAF will undertake significant upgrades of key elements of ground defence, including naval bases and principal airfields. In the Eastern Military District, the upgrades will include the Ukrainka air base (LRA units) and the Step airfield (Transbaikal region).[117] Significant upgrades are also expected within the military district's area of responsibility in the Arctic, including for a naval facility on the Shmidt peninsula (Chukotka) and Temp, Anadyr and Tiksi airfields (Figure 4).[118] The aim is to establish a comprehensive network of AD, naval and radar defence installations along the entire northern sea route.

Major exercise activity

Over the past decade, the defence forces have significantly intensified their combat training and operational activity. After Shoigu was appointed Defence Minister in 2012 the level of combat training made a noticeable qualitative leap. Snap inspections (*vnezapnye proverki*) of the state of combat readiness of units, army groups and operational–strategic commands were introduced. An emphasis is on improving operational flexibility and manoeuvre within and between different theatres. With RusAF elements spread across the country and Russia unable to sustain army groups along its entire perimeter, manoeuvre has become essential to national defence and threat response planning.

In 2013 and 2014, the Eastern Military District hosted two national-level strategic manoeuvres and snap check-ups. For example, during a strategic level snap check-up in July 2013, 30 military transport aircraft (An-124s and Il-76s) transported 8,500 personnel, 415 items of heavy equipment and 700 tonnes of supplies to the district.[119] Between 11 and 18 September 2014, the Russian military staged a strategic-level snap exercise involving about 100,000 active personnel of the Eastern and Central military districts (then the 3rd AF/AD Command) and RUSPAC, who were massed across the Far East and along key zones of Russia's Pacific coastline. The large-scale manoeuvring of forces included the redeployment of more than 100 combat and support aircraft, also with the aim of forming formidable air strike groups in the Far Eastern theatre.[120]

The most significant display of improved power projection capabilities in the Far Eastern strategic theatre was manifested at the Vostok–2014 [East–2014] strategic manoeuvres in September 2014, which involved 155,000 personnel, 8,000 pieces of armour and heavy equipment, about 85 warships and auxiliaries and 650 aircraft.[121] The manoeuvres included a sequence of mobilisation activities, the prepositioning of forces and various scenarios aimed at improving the interoperability of the fighting services. One of the most significant features of the manoeuvres was the massing of LRA elements (about 50 strategic bombers) in the Far East, which demonstrated Russia's capacity to mass long-range strike capability in the Pacific maritime theatre.

Since Vostok–2014, the Russian military has continued high levels of exercising and operational training, although at a smaller scale. In 2016, the most active unit was the 35th Army, which staged more than 200 exercises, including three brigade-level manoeuvres (each involving more than 2,000 personnel). Other major formations were also engaged in high-training (Table 3).

Table 3: Major exercise activity of the Eastern Military District, 2016 to 1 November 2017

Year	Month	Forces involved	Areas of exercise activities	Forces involved
2016	Late July 2016	Elements of the Far Eastern Military District and RUSPAC	Transbaikal, Amur regions, Maritime Province	>8,000 personnel; about 1,000 items of heavy equipment; about 100 aircraft and warships[a]
	17 to 20 August	5th and 36th armies	Eastern Military District	About 10,000 personnel and 2,000 items of heavy equipment, including aircraft[b]
	September	68th Army Corps	Sakhalin Island	3,500 personnel; about 800 items of heavy equipment; 8 aircraft; 8 warships[c]
2017	January	55th Naval Infantry Brigade	Maritime Province	1,000 personnel; about 100 items of heavy equipment[d]
	March-April	Artillery units of the 5th Army	Maritime Province	>2,500 personnel; 300 items of heavy equipment
	June	5th Army	Maritime Province	>2,000 personnel; >200 items of heavy equipment
	June	Artillery units of the 36th Army	Buryatia	About 2,500 personnel; about 700 items of heavy equipment
	July	Elements of the 29th and 36th armies and RFASF	Buryatia and Transbaikal regions	About 8,000 personnel; >3,000 items of heavy equipment; about 50 aircraft[e]
	August	Artillery units of the Eastern Military District	OSK Vostok area of responsibility	About 11,000 personnel; about 2,500 items of heavy equipment[e]
	August-September	68th Army Corps, 18th MGA-DIV	Sakhalin and Kuril islands	>3,500 personnel; about 1,000 items of heavy equipment[e]
	September	Communications and signals units of the Far Eastern Military District	OSK Vostok area of responsibility	>3,000 personnel; >1,400 items of heavy equipment[e]
	September	Artillery units of the Eastern Military District	OSK Vostok area of responsibility	About 7,000 personnel; about 2,000 items of heavy equipment[e]
	September	68th Army Corps	Sakhalin Island	>3,000 personnel; about 500 items of heavy equipment; 12 aircraft[f]
	October	11th Airborne Brigade, 11th AF/AD Army, VTA	Maritime Province	About 2,000 personnel; >400 items of heavy equipment; about 15 Il-76 aircraft, Su-25, Mi-8AMTShch[g]

a Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'VKS Vrasplokh ne Zaztanesh' ['Military Space Forces will not be caught by surprise'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 February 2017, p. 2.

b 'K Ucheniu v Zabaikal'e i Priamurie Privlekut do Desyati Tysaych Voennosluzhashchikh' ['Up to 10,000 servicemen will be involved in manoeuvres in the Transbaikal and Amur regions'], *RIA Novosti*, 17 August 2016, online.

c 'Na Sakhaline Voennye VVO Unichtozhili Morskie i Vozduzhnye Desanty "Protivnika" ['The military of the Eastern Military District liquidated "enemy's" sea and air assaults on Sakhalin'], *RIA Novosti*, 27 September 2016, online.

d *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 25–31 January 2017, 3(667), p. 1.

e Russian MoD.

f Russian MoD; data collected by the author.

g Konstantin Lobkov, Igor Rudenko, 'S Boyevym Nastroem' ['With good combat spirit'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 October 2017, p. 5; data collected by the author.

In 2016, the RFASF exceeded 340,000 in total flying hours.[122] While Russia's campaign in Syria has contributed to the increase in aerial operations, further intensification of combat training, aerial patrols along the immediate defence perimeter, out-of-area patrols and transport operations also played a significant part.

RFASF elements in Siberia and the Far East continued to intensify their training, aerial operations, and patrols. Compared with 2015, the total flying hours of Eastern Military District aviation increased by about 20%, exceeding 28,000 hours. Elements of army aviation equipped with Mi-8s, Mi-26s and Ka-52s were most active, followed by units equipped with fighter and air superiority aircraft (Su-27SMs, Su-30s and Su-35Ss).[123] Units of the 11th AF/AD Army took part in all major exercise activities of the Eastern Military District and RUSPAC, as well as engaging in independent operations and training. In 2017, the RFASF staged a number of significant exercises that were aimed mainly at practising force manoeuvre and force concentration in key theatres, including the Far East (Table 4).

Table 4: Major exercise activity of the RFASF in the Eastern Military District, February to October 2017

Month	Elements involved	Forces involved	Scenario/details
Early February	11th AF/AD Army; LRA (Tu-160s, Tu-95MS, Tu-22M3s); tactical aircraft (MiG-29s, Su-27s, Su-34s); Il-78 air fuellers; Mi-8 and Ka-52 multi-role helicopters; AD units	45,000 personnel; about 1,700 items of heavy equipment, including 150 aircraft and 200 SAMs	Relocation of key assets and intensive manoeuvring of forces between eastern and western theatres of operations.[a]
March to April	4th AF/AD Army (Southern Military District), 11th AF/AD Army	1,000 personnel, >350 items of heavy equipment, including about 40 aircraft: Su-27SM3, Su-30SM, Su-30M2, Su-34 and Mi-8MTPR (electronic countermeasures)	Elements of the 4th AF/AD Army were placed on high alert and were ordered to redeploy its air strike and SAM assets to the eastern theatre of operations. All airborne elements flew 8 hours non-stop, with three mid-air refuelling operations, at a distance of about 7,000 kilometres and were engaged in exercise activities immediately upon reaching their destination points. AD assets were transferred to the eastern theatre via rail (300 personnel and 200 items of heavy equipment, including S-300PM and Pantsir-S systems).[b]
March	AD units of the Eastern Military District	8,000 personnel; 1,000 items of heavy equipment (S-300 SAMs, *Tor*-M2U, other systems); >120 aircraft	The exercises were staged across the Amur region, Maritime Province, Sakhalin Island, Buryatia.
Early April	PFNA	MiG-31 and MiG-31BM	Several aircraft were redeployed from the Elizovo air base in Kamchatka to air bases in the Maritime Province, following intensive aerial exercises over the Bay of Peter the Great off Vladivostok.[c]
Late September – October	11th AF/AD Army	All fighter, ground attack and bomber units (Su-24M2, Su-25, Su-30SM, Su-34, Su-35S)	Exercises took place over the Maritime Province and Khabarovsk region.[d]
Late September	PFNA	6 Il-38/Il-38N ASW aircraft	All-weather day and night reconnaissance and tracking operations. A total of 25 sorties were flown.[d]

a Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'VKS Vrasplokh ne Zaztanesh' ['Military Space Forces will not be caught by surprise'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 February 2017, p. 2.

b Yuri Borodin, 'Sutki na Perelet' ['One day for flying over'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 3 March 2017, p. 2; Evgeniy Podzorov, 'Po Signalu Trevogi' ['Upon the alarm signal'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 April 2017, pp. 1 – 2; 'Novy Radius Porazheniya' ['New strike radius'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 14 April 2017, p. 1.

c Podzorov, 'Po Signalu Trevogi', p. 2.

d Russian MoD.

In 2017, the intensity of exercise activity by ground forces of the Eastern Military District was higher than in 2016. In the first four months of 2017 alone, ground elements of the district were engaged in more than 20 significant exercises, about 10 of which were organised as duels.[124] Overall, by the end of the 2017 training cycle, which normally finishes at the end of October, the district's ground forces staged more than 1,000 different exercises.[125]

Also in 2017, the Russian army was planning to engage in six joint international exercises involving India, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Vietnam,[126] five of which were to be held across the IndAsPac. It's expected that elements of the Eastern Military District and RUSPAC will be involved in at least half of those exercises.

Adding to the exercise activity, the senior command element of the Far Eastern Military District (army level) undertook combat duties in Syria on rotation basis, either as advisors to the Syrian military, or as commanders of RusAF's operational group deployed in the country. The ongoing Syria campaign also saw periodic involvement of personnel and units of the 11th AF/AD Army, LRA elements (Tu-22M3s of the 200th Guards Heavy bomber regiment based at the Belaya air base), Special Forces elements, and RUSPAC (Table 2). Engagement in combat operations in Syria adds to valuable operational experiences gained during first and second special campaigns in Chechnya for many frontline units of the OSK Vostok and RUSPAC. Lessons learned in Syria, particularly concerning operations planning, coordination and effective communication, the network centric approach to modern operations, the logistical enabler, are being incorporated in training across all elements of the OSK Vostok.

Power projection

A 2017 report by the US Defense Intelligence Agency highlighted Russia's increased capability to project power and engage in prolonged expeditionary operations similar to the Syria campaign.[127] Historically, Russia's power projection capability in the IndAsPac has been associated with its Pacific Fleet, which remains the backbone of the country's capacity to project military power across the Pacific and Indian oceans and their littorals. However, Moscow's current power projection capability isn't limited to its regional naval arm. Russia's ability to use other elements, including LRA and airborne troops, and theatre-to-theatre manoeuvre all have to be taken into consideration.

The Pacific Fleet

Russian naval power in the Pacific is organised in RUSPAC, which is an operational–strategic formation. In May 2017, the fleet had a combined strength of about 300 units, among them some 77 warships, including 23 submarines, with a total combined displacement of about 900,000 tonnes, divided between the Primorskaya and Kamchatskaya flotillas. RUSPAC has more than 30,000 active personnel (peacetime strength). Its operational area of responsibility covers the entire Pacific and Indian Ocean maritime theatres and stretches as far as South Africa, Australia, Antarctica and South America (Figure 5). Adding to RUSPAC"s order of battle, the Maritime Guard element of the Russian Border Guard Service deploys approximately 80 armed surface combatants (among them frigates and corvettes) in the Pacific, which could be utilised for limited combat operations in coastal waters and along the Amur River in wartime.

Figure 5: Russian Naval Power in the Indo-Pacific Strategic Maritime Theatre

RUSPAC's peacetime missions currently include:

- the maritime defence of the Far East and the Arctic
- the creation of favourable maritime regime in littoral seas
- the maintenance of a highly capable strategic nuclear arm (the SSBN force) and participation in strategic deterrent operations
- the protection of merchant shipping and guaranteed access to the sea-based resources in the Pacific
- the protection of areas of Russia's regional industrial maritime activity and its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) against unsanctioned use by other states
- support for Russia's regional foreign policy through forward presence and naval diplomacy
- peacekeeping operations sanctioned by the UN
- counter-piracy operations, operations to counter maritime crime, and counterterrorism activities.

In wartime, the fleet is likely to prioritise two principal missions: naval strategic warfare (support of SSBN operations) and the maritime defence of eastern Russia. Depending on their significance, these missions can be divided into three levels of tasks:

1. Strategic tasks: defence of the Okhotsk SSBN bastion and strategic strike; limited ASW; operations against enemy SSBNs
2. Operational–tactical (theatre) tasks: operations against enemy strike battle groups; ASW operations against nuclear-powered attack submarines
3. Tactical (local) tasks: local ASW; anti-SLOC warfare; mine warfare; coastal defence; limited amphibious operations.

To accomplish all three levels of tasks, the fleet will have to be ready to wage a number of naval operations, including strategic strike, ASW, anti-carrier warfare, surface strike warfare, mine warfare and amphibious warfare. RUSPAC's order of battle is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Russian Pacific Fleet order of battle, 2017

Pacific Fleet, Equipment by type			
Submarines	Strategic:	5 total	
		SSBN	5
	Tactical:	18 total	
		SSGN	5 (2 in refit)
		SSN	5 (1 in refit)
		SSK	8
Principal surface combatants	8 total		
	CGHG	2 (1 in reserve/conservation)	
	DDGHM	6 (3 in refit)	
Patrol and coastal combatants	25 total		
	FSGM	5	
	FSM	8	
	PCFG	9	
	PBM	3	
Mine warfare	8 total		
	MSO	2	
	MSC	6	
Amphibious	8 total		
	LST	4	
	LCM	3	
	LCU	1	
Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation, Forces, by role			
Fighters	1 squadron with 12 MiG-31B/BM Foxhound		
ASW	3 squadrons with 29 Ka-27/6 Ka-29 Helix		
	2 squadrons with 8 Il-38 May, 4 Il-38N Novella; Il-18D;1 Il-22 Coot B		
	1 squadron with 11 Tu-142MK/MZ/MR Bear F/J		
Transport	2 squadrons with 1 An-140-100, 2 An-12BK Cub; 3 An-26 Curl; 1 Tu-134		
Equipment, by type			
Aircraft	FTR	12 MiG-31B/BM Foxhound	
	ASW	23 total	
		11 Tu-142M3 Bear F/J; 12 Il-38 May and Il-38N Novella	
	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	ASW	29 Ka-27 Helix	
	TPT – medium	6 Ka-29M Helix; 26 Mi-8 Hip, 1 Mi-8AMTSh-VA	
Naval infantry, Forces, by role			
Manoeuvre	Mechanised	2 naval infantry brigades (155th and 40th)	
Air defence	1 SAM regiment (1532 nd)		
Coastal artillery and missile troops, Forces, by role			
Coastal defence	2 AShM brigades (72nd and 520th)		

Sources: *The military balance 2017*; *Defence of Japan 2016*; *RIA Novosti* (issues 2016–17), *TASS* (issues 2016–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2016–17); data collected by the author.

The surface arm of the fleet consists of some 50 warships, about 18% of which are ocean-going combatants capable of supporting out-of-area operations. Operational units include RUSPAC's flagship Moskva-class guided-missile cruiser (CG) RFS *Varyag* and four Udaloy-class and one Sovremenny-class guided-missile destroyers (DDGs).[128] All major surface units are assigned to the 36th Division of Surface Ships (cruisers and Sovremennys) and the 44th ASW Brigade (Udaloys).

Given the shortage of operational surface combatants, RUSPAC is now committing minor surface combatants to support long-range deployments. In late July 2016, a task group of the Kamchatskaya Flotilla comprising three missile corvettes, two ASW corvettes and a minesweeper returned from an eight-month out-of-area deployment (over 18,000 nm) to Petropavlovsk Kamchatskiy.[129] Similarly, in mid-2017, another task group of the Kamchatskaya Flotilla staged an out-of-area deployment, reaching the Korean Strait.[130]

On 4 April 2017, PFNA celebrated the 85th anniversary of its formation as a stand-alone element of the Russian Navy in the Pacific. It's an essential component of the fleet's combat potential. The air arm of the fleet currently has five basic missions: anti-ship strike; fighter attack; reconnaissance and surveillance; ASW; and search and rescue. In mid-2017, PFNA had about 105 fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft in its order of battle.

In 2016, the intensity of PFNA's flight operations increased by about 10% from the previous year, exceeding a total of 7,000 flying hours, its aircrews carried out around 300 ASW operations, and its transport element supported about 500 parachutists' drops (part of marines' and special forces' training), involving more than 10,000 personnel.[131] In 2017, PFNA retained the same levels of operational activity as in 2016, exceeding a total of 7,000 flying hours.[132]

Over the past three years, PFNA has started receiving new and upgraded platforms, including Il-38N Novella modernised ASW patrol aircraft and Ka-29M multi-role helicopters. In late 2016 and early 2017, its transport element received one An-140-100 fixed-wing aircraft and one Mi-8AMTSh-VA multi-role helicopter designed for operations in the Arctic.[133]

The Russian Navy values submarines for their strike capabilities, mobility, secrecy and ability to carry out the navy's primary task: strategic and tactical sea denial. The Russian submarine force in the Pacific is one of the world's oldest operating forces, and in 2017 celebrated 112 years since its creation. It has fewer units than it did 15 years ago, but it's now more cost-effective and better suited to Russia's economic capacity and geostrategic requirements.

The Pacific submarine force is divided into two principal groupings:

- the 16th Red Banner Submarine Squadron based at the Rybachiy naval base, Viliuchinsk: the 10th [anti-carrier] Submarine Division (one Akula-class SSN and three Oscar-II-class SSGNs); and the 25th [strategic] Submarine Division (two Boreys and three Delta IIIs)
- the 19th Submarine Brigade, Maly Ullis Bay, Vladivostok (five operational Kilos).[134]

In peacetime and wartime, RUSPAC's submarine force is intended to accomplish the following combat tasks:

- strategic nuclear deterrence
- anti-aircraft-carrier warfare
- strategic sea denial (anti-SSBN operations)
- tactical sea denial/interdiction operations
- targeted anti-SLOC operations
- surveillance and intelligence gathering.

Russian submarines are active in traditional areas of operations in the seas of Okhotsk and Japan and the Western Pacific, with occasional deployments to the East and South China seas. The capability upgrade of RUSPAC's submarine arm has begun, so a further intensification of submarine operation can be expected, extending its operational reach to the Southwestern Pacific and the Indian Ocean.[135]

Strategic reach: naval power

In the IndAsPac geostrategic context, Russia's ability to exercise strategic reach will be largely measured by the capacity of the Russian Navy to sustain out-of-area operations alongside regular deployments to the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Arctic, although any analysis should also include the country's long-range aerial operations and airborne capability, including mobile force elements.

Over the past five years, the Russian Navy has considerably increased its operational tempo, operational zones and the number of units deployed in forward areas. Despite some significant numerical reductions in its overall order of battle, the navy managed to reach Cold War levels of operational activity, involving deployments of dozens of warships and auxiliaries at any given time (between 70 and 100 annually). In 2016 alone, units of the Russian Navy staged more than 60 combat deployments in forward areas, around 20 of which were carried out by task groups. Approximately 90 ships were involved in long-range deployments, spending a total of around 10,000 days at sea.

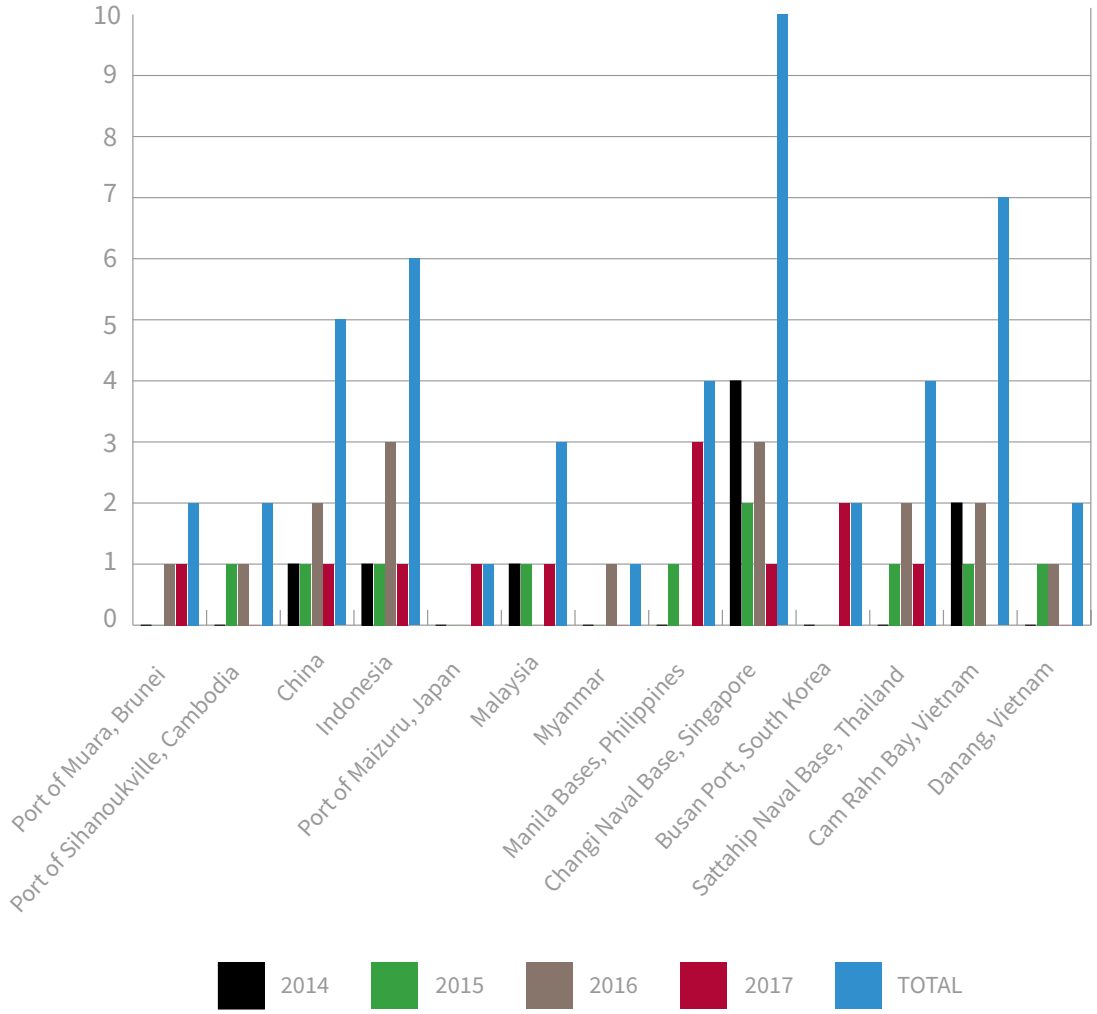
Russian out-of-area operations in the IndAsPac today include operations in the Western Pacific, the East and South China seas, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and, more recently, in the southwestern sectors of the Pacific and in the Arctic. Under Putin, Russia has once again declared the Arctic as an area of its immediate and longer term strategic interests. Swift moves by Moscow to secure its strategic dominance over the area have resulted from its aspirations to obtain maximum commercial dividends from exploring and exploiting the continental shelf, which also manifests in claims to the control of the largest EEZ in the area, and its desire to secure the northern sea route as a viable transit alternative to established Indo-Pacific maritime links.[136]

At the same time, the Eastern Military District and RUSPAC are expected to play significant roles in supporting and sustaining the operations of the newly formed regional command. Apart from using the Arctic Ocean for theatre-to-theatre force transfers (predominantly submarine deployments) and aerial patrols, RUSPAC has initiated surface ship operations in the area. In 2016, the Udaloy-class RFS *Admiral Panteleev* staged an exploratory deployment to the Arctic as part of the operational activity of the Arctic Command.[137] In 2017, PFNA elements commenced aerial operations in the Arctic.

The long-range activities of the Russian Navy have now extended into the traditional areas of operation of the Soviet Navy, reaching the Indian Ocean and the Antarctic. In May 2003, the navy deployed its largest taskforce (10 units) to the Indian Ocean since the 1980s.[138] Two years later, RUSPAC resumed regular deployments to the Indian Ocean by deploying its first task group to take part in the INDRA–2005 exercises with the Indian Navy.[139] It deployed its most powerful surface combatant, the 24,000-tonne Ushakov-class nuclear-powered battlecruiser RFS *Pyotr Velikiy*, to the Indian Ocean in 2009 for counter-piracy operations and visits to South Africa and India, and to the Pacific in 2010 on an operational deployment,[140] demonstrating its capacity to relocate key assets to the Pacific in times of operational need.

Although its deployable forces are smaller than those of the Soviet Union's navy, the Russian Navy continued high-tempo out-of-area operations in the Pacific throughout 2014 to 2016. Russian warships operated throughout Southeast Asia, near the Horn of Africa, in the Coral Sea and Western Pacific, and in the Mediterranean. Over that period, Russian warships operating in the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre made a total of 69 port calls: 35 in the Pacific and 34 in the Indian Ocean (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Russian Navy port calls in the Pacific maritime theatre, 2014 to 1 November 2017



Sources: MoD; *TASS* (issues 2014 to 2017); *INTERFAX* (issues 2014 to 2017); *Naval Today* (issues 2014 to 2017).

Between 2009 and 2014, RUSPAC took an active part in Russia's counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa by deploying at least nine task groups every year. However, since 2015, its forward naval deployments have been oriented more towards traditional Cold War-style activities (ASW and shadowing operations, support of friendly maritime regimes along key SLOCs, and active naval diplomacy). The fleet also supports Russia's campaign in Syria (Appendix, Table A2).

In 2016, RUSPAC carried out 27 significant exercises and deployments, of which 18 were out-of-area combat deployments,[141] which made up about a quarter of the Russian Navy's deployments in that year.[142] In comparison, in 2006 the fleet staged no more than four significant operations at sea.

It's worth noting the intensified exploratory operations of hydrographic units of the Russian Navy in recent years (Table 6). The extent of their operations is an indicator of the renewed need to obtain the most up-to-date hydrographic data in support of surface and submarine forward operations throughout the Indo-Pacific maritime theatre and the Arctic, including southwestern parts of the Pacific.

To sustain Russia's forward operations in the Indian Ocean and to further operational and strategic reach Russian MoD considers plans to establish a new support base (a replenishment point) in the Red Sea area. Should this plan be implemented, Russia would acquire another overseas support naval facility in addition to Tartus in Syria and the ability to call on Cam Ranh (Figure 6).[143]

Table 6: Russian Navy's oceanographic activities in the Indo-Pacific maritime theatre, 2014 to 1 November 2017

Month, year	Fleet	Operational units	Area of exploratory operations
July 2014	Pacific	RFS *Marshal Gelovani* and RFS *Vitse-Admiral Vorontsov*	Seas of Japan and Okhotsk
Mid-2014	Pacific	RFS *Antarktida*	South China Sea and the Strait of Singapore
August – December 2014	Baltic	RFS *Admiral Vladimirskiy*	The Artic (northern sea route) and northern Pacific
Mid- to late 2015	Pacific	RFS *Marshal Gelovani* and RFS *Fotiy Krylov* (ocean-going tug)	Southern and southwestern Pacific (about 20,000 nm at sea)
August – October 2015	Pacific	RFS *Vitse-Admiral Vorontsov*	Sea of Japan; Okhotsk, Chukchi and Bering seas (about 10,000 nm at sea)
November 2015 – April 2016	Baltic	RFS *Admiral Vladimirskiy*	Indian Ocean and the Antarctic (about 30,000 nm at sea)
Mid-2016	Pacific	RFS *Marshal Gelovani*	South China Sea
October 2016 – March 2017	Black Sea	RFS *Donuslav*	Black Sea, Mediterranean and Red seas, Gulf of Aden
April – August 2017	Baltic	RFS *Admiral Vladimirskiy*	Indian Ocean
October – November 2017	Northern	RFS *Yantar*	Indian Ocean

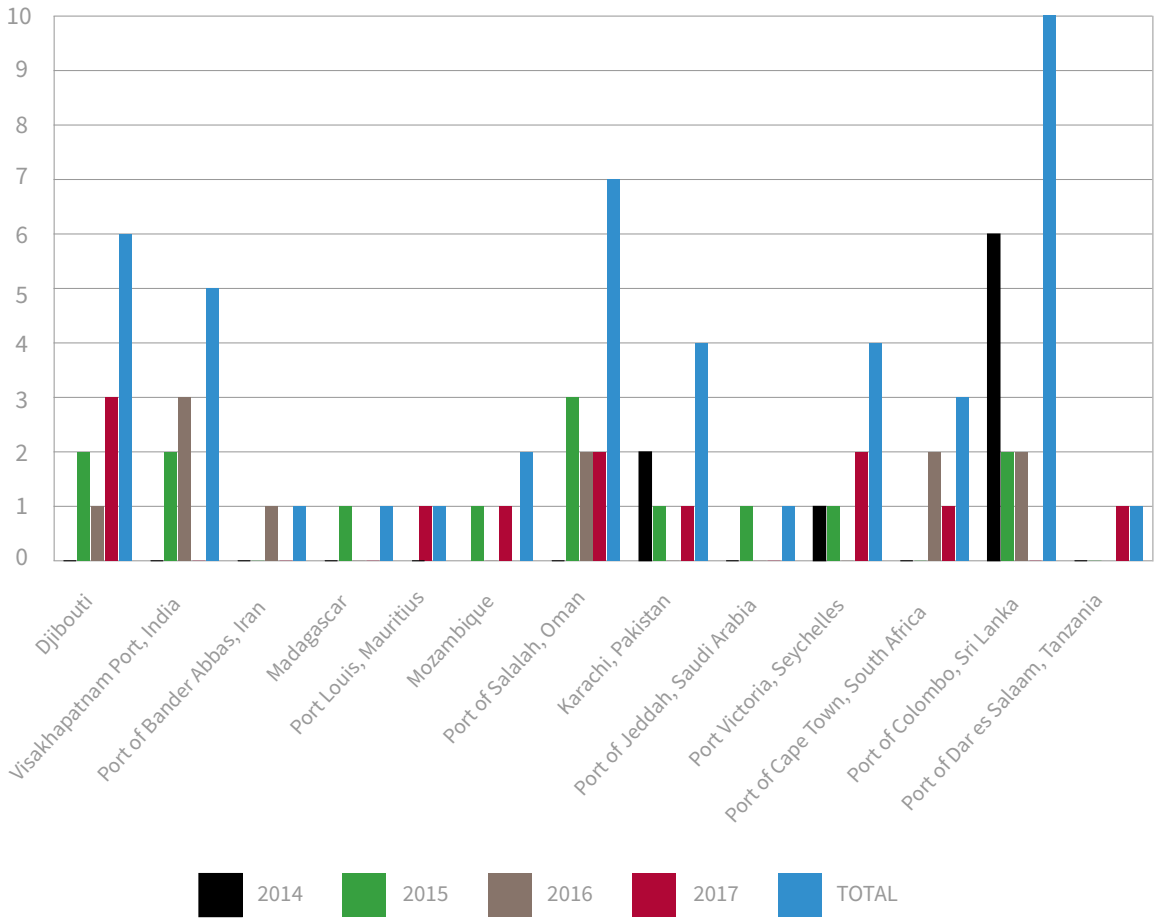
Source: *RIA Novosti* (issues 2016–17), *TASS* (issues 2016–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2016–17); *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2015–17); data collected by the author.

In 2017, the navy kept up a high operational tempo involving some 100 operational units in support of out-of-area deployments. According to the Chief of the Russian Navy, Admiral Vladimir Korolev, Russian warships spent 17,100 days at sea, an increase of 1,500 days from 2016.[144] The Russian Navy carried out a total of 139 long-range deployments in 2017, an absolute record in its post-Cold War history.[145]

Consequently, RUSPAC's operational intensity in 2017 also remained high. According to RUSPAC's Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Igor Osipov, between January and May RUSPAC's operational units spent about 3,000 days at sea, engaging in more than 100 tactical exercises and five major naval exercises involving all elements of the fleet. PFNA flew more than 140 significant sorties.[146] Between January and 1 November 2017, Russian warships operating in the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre made a total of 26 port calls (14 in the Pacific and 12 in the Indian Ocean), which was a significant increase over previous years (Figures 6 and 7). According to the RUSPAC command, surface units spent over 9,000 days at sea (surface combatants - about 4,000 days; auxiliary element - over 5,500 days). Compared with 2016, RUSPAC submarine force increased its operational activity by 20 per cent.[147]

Russia's ability to project naval power across the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre shouldn't be measured only in the context of the potential of its Pacific Fleet. As open-source data and an analysis of Soviet Cold War operations show, the Russian Navy deploys assets from a number of its fleets to key forward operating areas, including the Pacific and Indian oceans (Figure 7).[148] Russian naval activities in Southeast Asian waters in late 2014 are another indicative example. During November of that year, three naval task groups drawn from the Baltic, Black Sea and Pacific fleets carried out patrols and exercises in the Philippine and Coral seas, calling at ports in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.[149] RFS *Varyag* operated off Australia's Queensland coast at the time of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Brisbane—a rare display of Russian naval activity near Australian territorial waters. The navy's operational activity in Southeast Asia in late 2014 highlights the practice of massing forces from different maritime theatres.

Figure 7: Russian Navy port calls in the Indian Ocean maritime theatre, 2014 to 1 November 2017



Sources: MoD; *TASS* (issues 2014 to 2017); *INTERFAX* (issues 2014 to 2017); *Naval Today* (issues 2014 to 2017), data collected by the author.

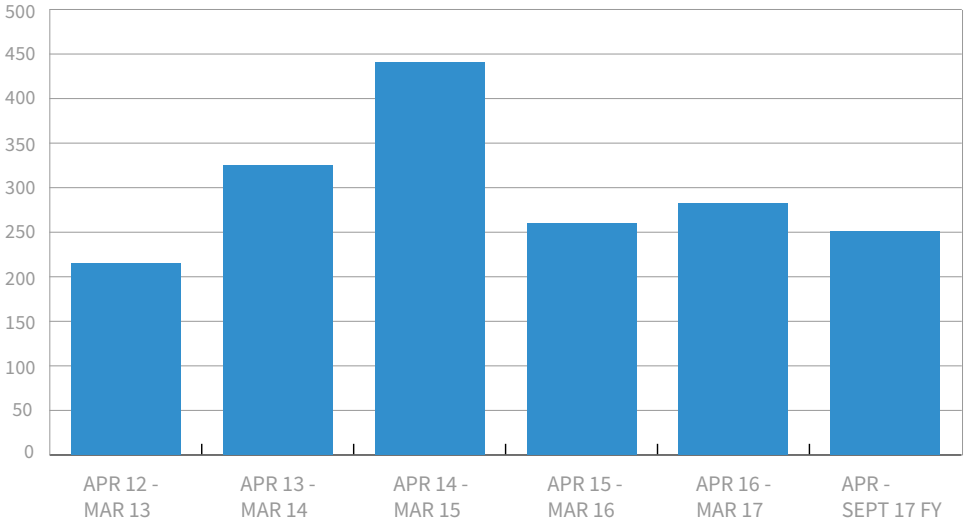
Strategic reach: air power

The Russian MoD uses its long-range air power as another form of power projection and a demonstration of intent. In 2016, LRA units carried out a total of 17 aerial patrols.[150]

Adding to Russia's increased forward naval activity, the tempo of the RFASF in sustaining the country's strategic reach across the Pacific is also very high. Over the past five years, most of Russia's forward aerial operations were held either near Japan or along the US Pacific coast. Russian strategic bombers, including Tu-95MS Bears, increased their operations following the escalation of the Ukraine crisis. Analysis of open-source data reveals that RFASF aircraft were intercepted by the US Air Force eight times off the Californian coast or near the Aleutian Islands between 2012 and 2016. The Japan Self-Defense Forces engaged in 1,599 intercepts of Russian aircraft over the same period (Figures 8 and 9).

Russian strategic aircraft also conducted prolonged patrols near Taiwan, over Southeast Asia, and as far as the US island of Guam (four times). Russian patrols over the SCS were supported by Il-78 Midas aerial tankers operating from Vietnamese bases,[151] suggesting that Russia has once again regained special access to Vietnamese air facilities.

Figure 8: Intercepts of Russian combat aircraft by Japan's Self-Defense Forces, FY 2012 to September 2017



Source: Japanese Ministry of Defence, *Statistics on scrambles through fiscal year 2016*, Joint Staff Japan, 2017, online; *RIA Novosti*, 2017.

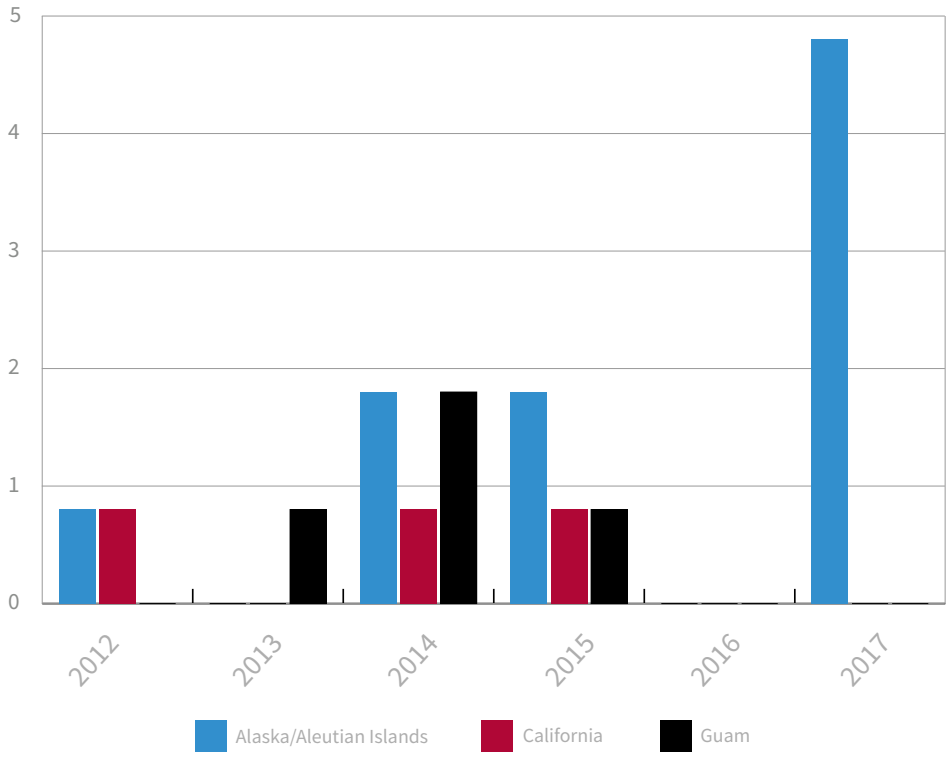
Russian aerial operations over the Pacific, including the SCS and adjacent areas, are being carried out in support of the nation's efforts to retain a degree of oversight over critical SLOCs and to project air power as a partial substitute for a reduced capacity to deploy sufficient naval power to areas of importance.

Since 2015, PFNA has been involved in long-range aerial patrols outside of Russia's immediate defence perimeter in the Pacific. In particular, in 2015–16, Il-38s based in Kamchatka staged aerial patrols in the vicinity of the Aleutian Islands.[152] It can be expected that this practice will continue in 2017 and beyond.

In 2017, the operational tempo of the RFASF has increased: there were five reported intercepts by the US Air Force off the US Pacific coast, while the Japan Self-Defense Forces have carried out 139 scrambles since the beginning of 2017 (Figures 8 and 9). The likely cause of such high operational tempo was the escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula, which led to the subsequent build-up of US offensive capability in the Sea of Japan.

Further intensification of Russian long-range operations can be expected in 2017 and beyond, particularly with the continuous expansion of Russian air power capability east of the Urals, including the formation of a heavy bomber division (Appendix, Table A1). For example, in early December 2017 two Tu-95MS strategic bombers from the Ukrainka air base and a pair of Il-76 were deployed to the Biak airfield in Indonesia, from which they ran an eight hour aerial patrol over the southern Pacific (7 December).[153]

Figure 9: Intercepts of Russian combat aircraft by the US Air Force, 2012 to October 2017



Sources: Open-source news sites, including *CNN, RT, Fox News, The Washington Times* and *The Blaze*.

Strategic reach: amphibious and airborne components

Currently, the amphibious and special operations component of the fleet includes three major elements:

- the naval infantry (marines) and naval special forces (naval *spetsnaz* and other special-purpose units)
- coastal missile artillery (the 72nd Missile Brigade stationed near Vladivostok and the 520th Missile Brigade stationed in Elizovo, Kamchatka)[154]
- the amphibious sealift element.

In 2013, RUSPAC's amphibious element was expanded with the transformation of the 3rd Independent Naval Infantry [marine] Regiment deployed in Kamchatka into a peace-strength brigade, thus increasing the number of Russian marine brigades in the Pacific to two (the 40th in Kamchatka and the 155th in Vladivostok). This larger marine force is being supported by the 100th Brigade of four large landing ships, which remain very active and also support out-of-area operations, including the Syria campaign.

In 2017, naval infantry units assigned to the RUSPAC started to be re-equipped with BTR-82 armoured personnel carriers and refitted T-80BM main battle tanks, which would provide them with improved firepower and amphibious capability.[155]

Adding to the marine element of Russian power projection strike capability in the IndAsPac are two elements of Russian airborne troops (*vozdushno-desantnye voiska* or VDV): the 11th Guards Air Assault Brigade (Ulan-Ude) and the 83rd Guards Airborne Brigade (Ussuriisk).[156] The 11th and 83rd brigades are part of Russia's rapid response strike capability deployed east of the Urals. The brigades often operate side by side with RUSPAC naval infantry units, including during amphibious assault and counter-amphibious exercises. During a strategic-level snap exercise held in September 2014, both brigades were placed on full alert and deployed along the Far Eastern immediate defence perimeter to Sakhalin, the Kurils and Anadyr (Chukotka). Elements of both brigades were airlifted over 4,000 kilometres to forward operating areas.[157]

The placing of both brigades under the VDV organisational and command structure is likely to improve their training, organisation and equipment. Equipment upgrades are already underway: in the first half of 2017, one air assault battalion of the 11th Brigade was to be re-equipped with modernised BMD-2KU airborne fighting vehicles, which are expected to replace BMP-2 standard infantry fighting vehicles.[158] Between 18 and 20 October, the restructured and re-equipped 11th Brigade took part in the largest VDV exercise in the Far East, which involved a rapid redeployment of its key strike assets and assault operations behind enemy lines (Appendix, Table A3).[159]

Russia's capability to rapidly deploy its airborne troops, other special force elements or other units will increase significantly with the expansion of military transport aviation (*voenno-transportnaya aviatsiya*; Appendix, Table A1).[160] The central location of a new military transport aviation division will allow it to provide rapid airlift support to all Russian military districts, as well as to assist with in-theatre force manoeuvres and out-of-area deployments.

The Eastern Military District has a deployable capacity to dispatch a naval infantry battalion (amphibious variant, about 500 personnel) and one airborne brigade (airborne variant, about 2,000 personnel) in support of out-of-area operations. This combined force can be engaged in limited-scale contingencies with the support of naval and air power assets. In times of greater crisis or operational need, the Russian MoD would redeploy elements of VDV, naval infantry and support assets (military transport aviation) from other theatres, massing a sizeable operational group in support of larger scale operations.[161] In addition, the formation of 20 tactical battalion groups (approximately 16,000 personnel) in the Eastern Military District provides the MoD with additional force options without the immediate need to call for reinforcements from other area commands.

Naval capability upgrades and future force development

Russia's near- and longer term ability to exercise influence and power projection will be conditional on its capacity to rebuild and sustain a potent navy, including the Pacific Fleet. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the geographical remoteness of RUSPAC, and a lack of funding, had a dramatic impact on the fleet's deployable force. By 2000, the number of its submarines was reduced by 75%, while the surface element fell by 47%, and there were declines in the scale and intensity of naval operations. In the 1990s and early 2000s, RUSPAC received barely any new additions to compensate for a massive decommissioning of assets.

The situation has improved over the past eight years. Between 2009 and 2017, the fleet received a total of 28 new units, mostly of auxiliary and support elements (Table 7).[162] Between 2009 and 2016 Russia's maritime border guards in the Pacific received nine new platforms.

In 2013, the then Commander of OSK Vostok, Admiral Konstantin Sidorenko, announced that RUSPAC would receive more than 40 warships, including nuclear-powered submarines, new-generation guided-missile destroyers, guided-missile frigates, missile corvettes, and amphibious and other craft.[163] Open-source data suggests that by 2024 RUSPAC expects to receive at least 30 new warships (11 new submarines, 19 new surface combatants) and seven new major auxiliaries (Appendix, Table A3). For the auxiliary vessels, the emphasis is on building up ocean-going underway replenishment support to sustain out-of-area deployments, and surveillance, intelligence gathering and tracking.

Table 7: New additions to the Russian Pacific Fleet, 2009 to October 2017

Type of platform	Project/class	Full displacement (tonnes)	Operational
Submarines	2 Borey-class SSBNs: RFS *Aleksandr Nevskiy* and RFS *Vladimir Monomakh*	24,000 (submerged)	2015 to 2016
Surface combatants	1 Project 22800 guided-missile corvette: RFS *Sovershenny*	2,220	20 July 2017
	4 Project 21980 *Grachenok* counter-sabotage high-speed armed patrol craft	139	2014 to 2017
	1 Project 21820 Diugon-class landing craft: RFS *Ivan Kartsov*	280	2015
Major auxiliaries	1 Project 20180 ocean-going armaments transport: RFS *Akademik Kovalev*	6,300	2015
	1 Project 21300C ocean-going rescue ship: RFS *Igor Belousov*	5,150	2016
	1 Project 23470 ocean-going tug: RFS *Andrei Stepanov*	3,000	November 2017
	1 Project V19910 hydrographic ship: RFS *Viktor Faleev*	1,227	2013
	1 Project 22030 ocean-going tug: RFS *Aleksandr Piskunov*	1,465	2014
Minor auxiliaries	3 Project 02690 self-propelled floating cranes		2015 to 2016
	4 Project 19920 BGK-797, BGK-2151, BGK-2152, and BGK-2153 hydrographic cutters	320	2009 to 2015
	8 port tugs		2014 to 2015
Maritime Border Guards of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation			
Major units	2 Project 22120 Purga-class PS-824 and PS-825 patrol corvettes	1,066	2010 to 2013
	2 Project 22460 Okhotnik-class patrol corvettes: RFS *Sapfir* and RFS *Korall*[a]	630	2014 to 2015
	1 Project 10410 Svetlayk-class PSKR-929 *Berkut* patrol ship[a]	375	2009
Minor units	2 Project 12200 Sobol high-speed craft		2011

a Project 22460 and 10410 platforms can be equipped with 3M24 Uran anti-ship missile systems; Sergei Cherkasov, 'Novye Nositeli "Kalibrov"' ['New carriers of the Kalibrs'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 1–7 February 2017, 4(688):9.

Source: *Jane's Fighting Ships* (editions 2009–10 to 2016–17); *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2015–17); *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (issues 2015–17); *RIA Novosti* (issues 2009–17), *TASS* (issues 2009–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2010–17); data collected by the author.

For the war-fighting component, the emphasis is on sustaining Russia's sea-based strategic nuclear deterrent capability and building up its attack submarine capability. In particular, RUSPAC will receive a brigade-size SSK force (six Project 636.3 boats) by 2022; the first two boats are scheduled to be laid out in July 2017 (Appendix, Table A3).[164]

By 2019, RUSPAC's strike capability is expected to be significantly expanded through the gradual introduction of new-generation strike systems armed with 3M14 Kalibr (SS-N-30A) long-range submarine/surface-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs). The construction of the ground support facility for the Kalibrs in Dunai (Maritime Province) is well underway and is scheduled for completion by November 2018.[165] Its delivery platforms include new and refitted nuclear-powered attack submarines (Severodvinsk class, Akula M class and Oscar II M class) and diesel–electric submarines (Project 636.3 Improved Kilos) and a new line of guided-missile corvettes (Projects 22385 and 22800) and frigates (Project 22350), which the fleet is expected to receive over the next six years.

In March 2017, it was revealed that RUSPAC's four 24,000-tonne Oscar II-class SSGNs will receive significant upgrades at the Zvezda shipyard in Bol'shoi Kamen. Apart from getting new suites of electronics and acoustics, all four Pacific Oscars (RFS *Chelyabinsk*, RFS *Irkutsk*, RFS *Omsk* and RFS *Tomsk*) will have their 24 P-700 Granit (SS-N-19 Shipwreck) SLCMs replaced with 3C14 Universal Launch Containers, which will allow them to fire 72 P-800 Oniks (SS-N-26 Strobile) or Kalibr SLCMs.[166] By increasing the strike payload and by improving other systems, the Russian Navy

expects to develop a potent submarine group capable of engaging enemy carrier battle groups, as well as delivering massive strikes against targets on land. Similarly, the Russian Navy will receive four upgraded Project 971M Improved Akula-class SSNs, among them RUSPAC's RFS *Bratsk* and RFS *Samara*.[167]

RUSPAC's conventional submarines are also undergoing an extensive refit program. In late January 2017, the Kilo-class B-187 *Komsomol'sk-na-Amure* SSK was reinstated in the fleet's order of battle after a lengthy refit and a capability upgrade at Komsomol'ks-na-Amure shipyard.[168]

Major surface units are also expected to undergo extensive refits and capability upgrades in the near future, which should prolong their operational lives and provide the fleet with improved surface warfare capabilities before the arrival of the next-generation ocean-going warships.[169] Similarly, minor surface combatants are receiving capability upgrades. For example, all the Nanuchka-class corvettes of the 114th Brigade of the Kamchatskaya Flotilla were the first in the Russian Navy to receive advanced MR-123-02/3 Bagira multipurpose naval artillery fire control systems, which now allow them to engage surface and aerial targets day and night in all weather conditions.[170] In 2018, two of the RUSPAC Nanuchkas will be rearmed with 16 modern 3M24 Uran (SS-N-25 Switchblade) surface to surface missiles, which will replace the aging suite of six P-120 Malakhit (SS-N-9 Siren).[171]

In late May 2017, Russia's Deputy Defence Minister, Yuri Borisov, emphasised that the SAP-27 would prioritise the development of national naval capability in the Arctic and the Pacific and continuous force posture development in Crimea.[172] This may result in a further intensification of RUSPAC's modernisation.

As part of this new phase, RUSPAC's amphibious sealift capability may get a significant boost with the commissioning of a new line of indigenously built landing platform docks.[173] Following a fiasco with French-built Mistrals, Russian shipbuilders were quick to develop several alternative concept designs for home-made landing platform docks, including Projects Priboi and Lavina. In late May 2017, Borisov confirmed that the acquisition of a new line of landing platform docks was part of SAP-27, and that the first unit is scheduled for delivery around 2022.[174] With SAP-27, emphasis on the Pacific and the Arctic, and with the development of shore-based infrastructure for the Mistrals in Vladivostok, it's likely that the first one or two units will be fielded with RUSPAC after commissioning.

Russia's current military posture east of the Urals reflects its emphasis on large-scale defensive and limited offensive operations involving the mobilisation of large armoured and mechanised formations. Strategic exercises in 2013 and 2014, and follow-on activities, demonstrated Russia's considerable progress in building the capacity to mass forces in a strategic theatre and an ability to respond to serious military contingencies, should such a need arise in the country's east.

After years of continued decline and neglect, Russian military power east of the Urals is making a major qualitative leap. Under the current SAP-20, a priority is given to bolstering tactical airpower and AD capability, carrying out targeted upgrades of ground force elements, and commencing the long-awaited modernisation of RUSPAC. According to General Shoigu, the Eastern Military District is expected to receive more than 13,000 items of new heavy armaments and other military equipment by 2020,[175] although that target is unlikely to be reached due to the need to support capability build-up in the country's west and southwest and to provide ongoing support for Russia's campaign in Syria.

However, the preliminary results of the modernisation are now visible. The military's numerical and organisational decline has effectively been reversed: Russia's MoD is introducing new units or reorganising existing ones into larger formations that are designed to give the command of the Eastern Military District greater operational flexibility, force mobility and offensive firepower. In 2014–17, Russian MoD formed one army corps HQ (the 68th), one new aviation division (*divizia*), four brigades, several regiments and battalions. Significant qualitative upgrades of regional air power (by late 2017 the 11th AF/AD Army received 289 new fixed wing and rotary aircraft) and AD capability combined will provide RusAF units in the area with flexible force response options, enhanced capacity to counter possible aerospace offensive operations, as well as sea-based threats, and also through the ability to establish A2/AD over key areas.[176]

Of all four fleets of the Russian Navy, RUSPAC was the one most affected by the post-1991 cataclysms. Now, after years of being cash starved and overlooked in force modernisation, the renewal of its ageing force has begun. By 2025, the fleet is expected to strengthen its order of battle with new and upgraded platforms. The priority is to make a qualitative leap in long-range precision strike capabilities and force sustainment during forward deployments. The modernisation won't increase RUSPAC's numerical strength, but will aim to provide the Russian Navy in the Pacific with some core capabilities that were previously not seen in its order of battle, such as long-range, high-precision strike capabilities.

For power projection capability, the modernisation will be limited to some aerial elements (LRA, airborne troops and special operations elements) and the naval component. The latter will continue playing the leading and most visible role in projecting national military power across the region. The deployment of sizeable combined taskforces to Southeast Asia, the southwest Pacific and the Indian Ocean and regular operational presence in the western and northern Pacific, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean are all part of a national maritime strategy aimed at globalising Russia's naval operations and concentrating the bulk of its out-of-area activities in key strategic areas. Its force projection capability may be increased with the possible introduction of an expeditionary element after 2022.

We must also recognise the involvement of the RusAF elements based in the country's west in forward operations across the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre. This applies to Russia's naval and aerial operations and possible contingencies in the future requiring the exercise of theatre-to-theatre manoeuvre.

Conclusion: prospects for Australia

Australia's strategic relations with Russia are almost non-existent. The end of the Cold War confrontation didn't lead to any major breakthroughs in bilateral contacts, which remained low throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Espionage remained an ongoing security concern: in mid-1993, Australia secretly expelled six Russian diplomats on 'suspicions of spying'.[177] In the 2000s, the Australian security community reported a sharp increase in Russia's intelligence-gathering activities.[178] Access to highly sensitive information shared by the US and NATO allies, as well as to advanced military and dual-use technologies, remains a major point of interest for foreign intelligence services.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s Russia did not feature at all in Australia's strategic calculus. None of the recent Australian Defence White papers, including the 2016 edition, considered Russia as a military power worth recognising.

In response to Russia's actions in Ukraine and the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines MH17, Canberra joined the US, NATO, EU member-states and Japan to enforce a tight sanction regime against Russia. Significant activities, such as the US$1 billion uranium agreement, were suspended. Consultations, including on security and counterterrorism, were also suspended.

Despite strong suspicions of Russia, the Turnbull government has begun to reanimate consultations with Moscow, although any bilaterals are still being affected by the MH17 findings and the sanctions regime. The need for such dialogue is driven by a number of considerations, among them continuous work through the UN Security Council, G20, ADMM Plus and other frameworks. Australia's perceptions of Russia's current activities in the IndAsPac are shaped by two countervailing views: Moscow can play a supportive and cooperative role, or it can choose to act competitively and thus create heightened tension.[179]

The 2017 Australian Foreign Policy White Paper summarises the current government's strategy towards Russia:

> Given its international role and reach, Russia's policies affect Australia both directly and indirectly. We will deal carefully with Russia to advance our interests where we see scope. Equally, Australia will work with partners to resist Russia's conduct when it is inimical to global security. Australia remains particularly concerned by the downing of flight MH17 and Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine.[180]

There are a number of areas in which Canberra and Moscow can develop an ongoing security dialogue, even at times of continuous political mistrust. They include:

- counterterrorism
- countering violent extremism and drug trafficking
- civil defence and disaster relief
- maritime safety and search and rescue.

North Korea is another point of mutual security concern. Given its ongoing economic interests and its immediate security concerns, Russia may play a proactive mediator role in assisting negotiating a political–military resolution of the Korean crisis, becoming an 'honest broker for North Korea'.[181] Similarly, Afghanistan can become another avenue for discussion and consultation.

A low-level defence dialogue could be the next step forward. Russia is the only major military power with which Australia has no formal or informal defence-to-defence contacts, even though the ADF and the RusAF occasionally operate side by side in some environments, such as during counter-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean.

The ADF has established links with China's PLA and other militaries that shape the regional and global strategic balance. Australia pursues active security and defence engagements with countries that either have close strategic ties with Russia (such as India or Vietnam) or are developing them (ASEAN, Pakistan and others). Russia's modern military power is ranked number two in the world—a factor that needs to be added into any strategic calculus in Canberra.

Establishing a communication channel with Russia, particularly when the ADF is actively engaged in the Middle Eastern theatre of operations, makes operational sense, especially when the Russian Navy is intensifying its activity in the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre. The deployment of Russian strategic bombers to Indonesia in December 2017 is another illustration why such a communication channel is required. Initial contacts can be limited to regularised meetings of a security and defence experts group and consultations through the ADMM Plus and Shangri-La Dialogue.

Under Vladimir Putin, the Russian military has managed to close its capability gap with the most advanced Western militaries and transformed itself from a large, underequipped, understaffed, low-morale army into a highly motivated, battle-hardened and effective force. A 2017 US Defense Intelligence Agency report described the modern Russian military as a 'smaller, more mobile, balanced force rapidly becoming capable of conducting the full range of modern warfare'.[182]

Despite an overwhelming belief that Russia is out of the IndAsPac strategic equation, and that it has no means to rebuild and sustain its military power in the region, let alone project that power beyond its immediate littoral, developments over the past five years show the opposite. Moscow has embarked on the most ambitious capability upgrade of its eastern forces since the early 1980s. Its defence posture east of the Urals is expanding in both numbers and capability, although recent improvements haven't yet had a negative impact on the regional balance of power.

Contrary to regional perceptions and suspicions of the Soviet Union's intent during the Cold War, and to worrying concerns about Moscow's intention towards Europe, Putin's Russia isn't a fear factor across the IndAsPac. Russia's increased operational activity and reach haven't been perceived as threatening or destabilising.

Moscow remains a geopolitical enigma in the Indo–Asia–Pacific, where it can play both stabilising and destabilising roles. Developing a dialogue with Russia is essential; keeping an eye on its BEARing back is a given.

NOTES

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2 E Zakharov, VN Bagrov, SS Beve, MH Zakharov, MP Kotukhov, *Krasnoznamenny Tikhookeanskiy Flot* [Red Banner Pacific Fleet], 2nd editions, Voennoe Izdatelstvo, Moscow, 1973, pp. 6, 12; Admiral Mikhail Zakharenko, 'Na Dal'nevostochnykh Rubezhakh Rossii' ['On Russia's far eastern shores'], *Morskoi Sbornik*, no. 9, 2000, p. 20.

3 Zakharov et al., *Krasnoznamenny Tikhookeanskiy Flot*, pp. 9–10.

4 S Pryamitskiy, 'Na Beregakh Zolotogo Roga' ['On the shores of the Golden Horn Bay'], *Morskoi Sbornik*, no. 9, 2000, p. 85.

5 TB Millar, *Australia in peace and war: external relations since 1788*, ANU Press, Sydney, 1991, pp. 9–10.

6 Elena Govor, *Australia in the Russian mirror: changing perceptions 1770–1919*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1997, p. 5.

7 Alan Dupont, *Australia's threat perceptions: a search for security*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, p. 2.

8 Dupont, *Australia's threat perceptions: a search for security*, p. 2.

9 Paul Dibb, 'Soviet strategy towards Australia, New Zealand and the southwest Pacific', *Australian Outlook*, 1985, 39(2):69.

10 Growing ideological dissonance between the two communist powers escalated after Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech at the 20th Soviet Communist Party Congress in 1960 saw the cooling of bilateral relations, which led to a derailment of Soviet support to the PRC. China's 1962 invasion of Tibet and its conflict with India, the Soviet principal partner in South Asia, followed by a successful nuclear test two years later, caused grave concerns in the Kremlin about Beijing's future strategic intent. From mid-1960s, tensions arose.

11 A Bogaturov, *Velikie Derzhavy na Tikhom Okeane* [*Great powers in the Pacific*], Institut SShA i Kanady RAN, Moscow, 1997, pp. 141–42.

12 N Matiushin, *17-ya Operativnaya Eskadra Korablei Tikhookeanskogo Flota* [*The 17th Operational Squadron of the Pacific Fleet*], Kuchkovo Pole, Moscow, 2011, p. 36.

13 Vladimir Chernavin, *Atomny Podvodny* [*Nuclear-powered submarine*], Andreevskiy Flag, Moscow, 1997, p. 411.

14 The Cam Ranh signal intelligence (SIGINT) complex enabled the Soviet military command to screen elements of the US 7th Fleet based in the Philippines, as well as Chinese maritime and naval activity in both the East China Sea and the SCS. The naval base was the home port of the 17th Operational Squadron, formed for operations in Southeast Asian waters. By the end of 1985, 24 units of the 17th Squadron, including surface combatants, submarines and auxiliaries, were stationed in the base. Cam Ranh air base, with its nearly three-kilometre-long single runway, accommodated a multi-role regiment of reconnaissance, maritime strike, ASW and fighter aircraft (30 Tu-16/95/142 and MiG-23 aircraft).

15 Dibb, 'Soviet strategy towards Australia, New Zealand and the southwest Pacific', p. 70.

16 Grigoriy Yakovlev, 'Tokio Khochet Podruzhitsya' ['Tokyo wants to be friends'], *Nezavisinoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 18–24 November 2016, 43(926), p. 5.

17 Zakharenko, 'Na Dal'nevostochnykh Rubezhakh Rossii', p. 23.

18 Captain 2nd Rank Aleksandr Khrolenko, 'Pri Rechke Karatun' ['On the Karatun River], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 23 July 1999, p. 2.

19 By 1991, littoral seas became main zones of Soviet naval activity in the Pacific, with the exception of the 8th and the 17th operational squadrons, which operated in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, respectively.

20 Vasiliy Kashin, *Rossiiskiy Podhod k Problemam Regional'noi Bezopasnosti v ATR i Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva s Yaponiei* [*Russia's approaches towards problems of regional security in the Asia–Pacific region and perspectives of cooperation with Japan*], Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Moscow, 2016, pp. 4–8.

21 'Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii' ['The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 14 January 2015, p. 2.

22 'Osnovy Gosudarstvennoi Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v Oblasti Voenno-Morskoi Deyatel'nosti na period do 2030 Goda' ['The foundations of state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of naval activity until 2030'], *Pravo.gov.ru* (pdf), 20 July 2017, online.

23 See General Makhmut Gareev, *If war comes tomorrow? The contours of future armed conflict*, Frank Cass, London, 1998, p. 36.

24 Vasiliy Kashin, *Rossiiskiy Podhod k Problemam Regional'noi Bezopasnosti v ATR i Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva s Yaponiei*, pp. 4–5; Peter Rainow, 'If war will come tomorrow', in Stephen J Cimbala (ed.), *The Russian military into the twenty-first century*, Frank Cass, London, 2001 pp. 43–44.

25 The offensive element of Soviet Cold War strategy in the Far East included a theatre-level land and air offensive in Manchuria and outer Mongolia (target: the PRC) and open-ocean sea-control operations in the Western Pacific and a continuous SLOC interdiction campaign across the Indo-Pacific (target: the US and its regional allies).

26 Captain 1st Rank A. Nagorskiy, 'Realizatsiaya Voenno-Morskim Flotom Polozheniy Morskoi Doktriny Rossiiskoi Federatsii' ['The implementation of provisions of Russia's maritime policy by the navy'], *Morskoi Sbornik*, 2017, 2, p. 50.

27 First-and second-generation Soviet SSBNs were equipped with short- and medium-range SLBM systems, necessitating deployment close to enemy shores. For example, the Hotel-class SSBNs had to be positioned near the US west coast (within several hundred kilometres) due to limited range of the SLBMs they carried, while the improved Yankee-class boats were able to run more distant patrols (at distances of around 2,000 kilometres). The Soviet SSBNs deployed on combat patrols in 'forward areas' of the Pacific required protection against an enemy's ASW forces, thus predetermining the operations of the Soviet task groups in the areas of their combat patrols.

28 Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'Faktory Boegotovnosti' ['Factors of combat readiness'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 February 2017, p. 1.

29 Konstantin Sivkov, '"Chernye Dyry" i Krasnye Linii' ['The "black holes" and red lines'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 3–9 May 2017, 17(681), p. 5.

30 Andrei Gavrilenko, 'Obespechivaya Natsionalnuiu Bezopasnost' ['By supporting national security'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 August 2016, p. 2.

31 There's an ongoing debate among Russian defence experts on the need to implement the operational requirement for 'hardened' SSBN bastions, in which Russian strategic submarines will be fully protected from high-precision strategic strikes. Leonid Orlenko, 'Kak Zashchititsya ot "Bystrogo Global'nogo Udara"' ['How to protect yourself against the "quick global strike"'], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 17–23 March 2017, 9(940), pp. 10–11.

32 'Na Kurilah Razvernuty Paketnye Kompleksy "Bal" i "Bastion"' ['Missile complexes Bal and Bastion are being deployed on the Kurils'], *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 22 November 2016, online.

33 Russian defence experts believe that recent improvements of the defence posture on the Kurils make the possibility of Japanese military offensive on the islands unlikely. Aleksandr Khramchikhin, 'Kurilam ne Byt' Yaponskimi' ['The Kurils will not be Japanese'], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 24–30 March 2017, 10(941):3.

34 'Korabli na Baze VMF na Kurilakh v Perspektive Mogut Stat' Chastiu Sistemy PRO' ['Ships stationed at a naval base on the Kuril Islands could become part of the ABM system in the future'], *RIA Novosti*, 1 November 2017, online.

35 Aleksandr Kholenko, 'Stanet li Kuril'skiy Ostrov Matua Novoi Bazoi Tikhookeanskogo Flota Rossii' ['Will the Kurils' Matua Island become a new base of Russia's Pacific Fleet'], *RIA Novosti*, 8 June 2017, online; Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016*, Japanese Government, Tokyo, 2016, p. 79.

36 Liudmila Zakharova, 'Economic cooperation between Russia and North Korea: new goals and new approaches', *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2016, 7(2), pp. 151–61.

37 Furthermore, acquiring sufficient labour without increasing the movement of people from Asian countries is a predicament for Russia and it thus views North Korea as a possible source of low-cost labour. Chang Park, Er-Win Tan, Geetha Govindasamy, 'The revival of Russia's role on the Korean peninsula', *Asian Perspective*, 2013, 37(1), pp. 125–147.

38 Valeria Fedorenko, 'New ferry links North Korea and Russia despite US calls for isolation', *Reuters*, 19 May 2017, online.

39 Svetlana Khramova, 'Putin Vvel Sanktsii Protiv KNDR v Otvet na Raketno-Yadernye Ispytaniya' ['Putin imposed sanctions against DPRK in response to nuclear-missile tests'], *Izvestia*, 16 October 2017, online.

40 Park et al., 'The revival of Russia's role on the Korean peninsula', p. 126.

41 For example, in April 2016, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, made a statement at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) calling for a collective end to the dangerous developments on the Korean peninsula. Lavrov said that efforts by states to overthrow lawful governments need to be abandoned. Instead, solutions should be sought through inclusive multilateral security mechanisms, international law and diplomatic dialogue to resolve ongoing disputes. CICA, 'Statement by H Mr Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, online.

42 These activities include large-scale exercises of RFASF elements, including the rapid relocation of assets from the Southern Military District, air defence exercises, and brigade-level army exercises in the Transbaikal region. See Part 2, *'Means and ends'*.

43 On 14 July 2016, the official spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova, noted that Russia was not a 'party of the territorial dispute in South China Sea' and that it won't become involved in the dispute. 'We are not taking anyone's side as a matter of principle', she noted. 'We support efforts by ASEAN and China to develop a code of behaviour in South China Sea. 'RF Podderzhivayet Usiliya Kitaya po Vyrabotke Kodeksa dlya Iuzhno-Kitaiskogo Morya' ['The Russian Federation supports China's efforts to develop code of behaviour in South China Sea'], *RIA Novosti*, 14 July 2016, online.

44 In particular, Putin noted the following: 'We of course have our own opinion on this matter. It is that, first of all, we do not interfere and we believe that any intervention of a non-regional power goes only to the detriment of settling these issues. The intervention of third-party non-regional powers, in my opinion, is harmful and counterproductive … We stand in solidarity

and support of China's position on this issue—not to recognize the decision of this court … This is not a political position, but purely legal. It lies in the fact that any arbitration proceedings should be initiated by the disputing parties, while the arbitration court should hear the arguments and positions of the disputing parties. As you know, China did not address the Hague arbitration and no one listened to its position there. How can you recognize these decisions as fair? We support China's position on this issue.' 'Putin: Rossiya Solidarna s KNR, ne Priznavshei Reshenie Suda po Iuzhno-Kitaiskomu Moriu' ['Putin: Russia is in Solidarity with PRC, which did not recognise the court ruling on South China Sea', *TASS*, 5 September 2016, online.

45 In August 2016, Ukraine's Foreign Minister, Pavel Klimkin, announced an intent by Kiev to lodge an appeal to the international arbitration court concerning alleged violations of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea by Russia with respect to littoral areas of the Black and Azov seas and the Strait of Kerch, as well as access to sea-based resources, including oil, gas and marine products. Liudmila Aleksandrova, 'Eksperty Otsenili Perspektivy Iska Ukrainy k Rossii iz-za Kryma' ['Experts have determined perspectives of Ukraine's appeal to Russia with respect to Crimea], *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 22 August 2016, online. While Russia dismisses such an action by Ukraine as pointless, some experts point out that, if such an appeal is to be lodged, Moscow may be confronted with some serious legal challenges and that a ruling of the court in The Hague in favour of Ukraine would lead to further complications in Russia–West relations.

46 'RF Sushchestvenno Rasshirila Voevvye Svyazi po Vsemu Miru, Zayavili v Minoborony' [The Russian Federation has significantly increased military ties worldwide, stated in the Ministry of Defence], *RIA Novosti*, 17 November 2017, online.

47 Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016*, p. 39.

48 Anna Polyakova, 'Dialogi v Tokio' ['Dialogues in Tokyo'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 March 2017, p. 2.

49 Stephen Blank, 'Russian arms sales and defense industries: facing new challenges', *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, September 2016, 28(3), p. 404.

50 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 'Armaments, disarmament and international security: summary report', *SIPRI yearbook 2016*, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 20.

51 Aleksandr Beluz, 'Oboronka dlya Balansa' ['The defence industry for the [state's] balance'], *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 7 July 2017, p. 2.

52 'Torgovlya Oruzhiem radi Ukrepleniya Mira', *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 14 July 2017, online.

53 Vyacheslav Baskakov, Sergei Fedoseev, 'Neoekonomika Pridast Impul's Rossiiskomu Oruzheinomu Eksportu' [The neo-economy will add an impulse to Russia's arms exports], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 19–25 August 2016, 31(914), p. 14.

54 Out of those 8,000, about one-third come from member states of the Collective Security and Defence Organisation—Russian-led Eurasia's regional defence alliance. Beluz, 'Oboronka dlya Balansa', p. 2.

55 'Russian warship to visit Brunei', interview of Russia's Ambassador to Brunei, Vladlen Semivolos, by *The Brunei Times*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016, online.

56 'Rossiya Vidit v ASEAN Partnera v Obospechenii Regional'noi Bezopasnosti' ['Russia sees ASEAN as a partner in preserving regional security'], *RIA Novosti*, 4 June 2017, online.

57 *Morskaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii* ['The Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation'], *Kremlin.ru*, 26 July 2015, online.

58 'Bolee 3.5 tys. Voennykh iz 29 Stran Primut Uchastie v ArMI-2017' ['Over 3,500 military from 29 countries will take part in the ArMI-2017'], *TASS*, 12 July 2017, online.

59 Artem Novikov, 'BRICS—Blagorodnoe Delo' ['BRICS is a noble business'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 29 March – 4 April 2017, 12(676):8; Nikolai Surkov, 'Voennoe Sotrudnichstvo RF i Kitaya Napugalo Vashington' ['Military cooperation between the Russian Federation and China has scared Washington'], *Izvestia*, 3 April 2017, online.

60 Formally, the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

61 The closure of Cam Ranh coincided with the closure of Russia's SIGINT facility in Lourders, Cuba, which gave the Russians considerable capabilities in electronic surveillance over the US eastern seaboard—a longstanding point of contention between Moscow and Washington.

62 Apparently, the electronic intelligence collected by the Russian SIGINT facility in Cam Ranh on Chinese activities in the SCS was shared with Vietnamese counterparts.

63 The combined force included 10,000 troops, more than 70 aircraft, 65 warships and auxiliaries, and more than 100 fighting vehicles. The RusAF provided five warships and auxiliaries; more than 20 combat and transport aircraft, among them two Tu-95MS *Bear H* and four Tu-22M3 *Backfire C* bombers; and 1,800 personnel, including paratroopers and marines. The PLA contributed a total of 8,000 troops, 60 surface ships and submarines, and 51 aircraft. Oleg Zhunusov, 'Mirnaya Missiya—2005' ['Peace Mission—2005'], *Izvestia*, 24 August 2005, p. 4. The exercise was formally held under the umbrella of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Other member states didn't contribute force elements to Peace Mission 2005 but were represented by observers. Despite the declared counterterrorism agenda of the exercise, concerns were raised about the true strategic intent of these war games, which involved strategic bombers, nuclear-powered submarines and AWACS aircraft.

64 Operations in the same forward area gave the Russians and the Chinese an opportunity to further their naval cooperation. In September 2009, the Russian and Chinese navies carried out joint counter-piracy exercises in the Bay of Aden. Following the exercises, a combined task group of RUSPAC and the PLAN carried out joint convoy operations. Ucheniya po Antipiratskoi Tematike' ['Counter-piracy exercises'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 2009, 37(303), p. 1.

65 In the Indo-Pacific maritime theatre, the Sino-Russian naval exercises were meant to send a warning to the US and its allies that neither Eurasian power was accepting US naval dominance in that theatre.

66 The high-level computer war games were carried out in Moscow from 23 to 28 May 2016. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskoe KSHU po PRO' ['Russian–Chinese ABM Computer Command and Staff exercise'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 May 2016, online.

67 Oleg Grozny, 'S Pritselom na Budushchee' ['With an aim towards the future'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 9 June 2017, p. 2.

68 Viktor Ruchkin, 'Vpervye s Sovetskikh Vremen' ['For the first time since Soviet times'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 November 2014, p. 2.

69 Andrei Gavrilenko, '"Druzhboi Budem Dorozhit' ['Friendship will be cherished'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 October 2016, p. 1. The exercise involved a special reconnaissance unit of Russia's Southern Military District.

70 Friendship 2017, which was held between 26 September and 4 October, involved elements of Russia's Southern Military District. Aleksandr Pinchuk, 'V Gorakh Arkhyza' ['In the Arkhyz Mountains'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 27 September 2017, pp. 1, 3.

71 As part of this new agreement, India is expected to acquire S-400 AD systems, four additional Project 11356 guided-missile frigates and 140 Ka-226 helicopters. In addition, New Delhi is discussing with Russia the leasing of the second Akula II-class SSN. Novikov, 'BRICS—Blagorodnoe Delo', p. 8.

72 Aleksandr Aleksandrov, 'Dorozhnaya Karta Sotrudnichestva' ['The road map of cooperation'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 26 June 2017, p. 2.

73 INDRA 2017 involved about 700 personnel and more than 100 items of heavy equipment, including four major surface combatants, one auxiliary and one submarine; about 50 fixed-wing and rotary aircraft; air defence systems; and armoured vehicles. Aleksandr Aleksandrov, 'U "Indry" Novy Format' [INDRA has a new format], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 October 2017, p. 5

74 The Vietnamese military received 36 Su-27SK/-30Mk2B multirole aircraft, two Gepard 3.9-class guided-missile corvettes, six Project 12418 missile corvettes and other combat systems. Since 2009, Russia has been building a series of six improved Kilo-class SSKs for the Vietnamese Navy, as well as constructing a submarine training facility in Cam Ranh Bay. Nikolai Novichkov, 'Nadezhny Zakazchik Rossiiskogo Vooruzheniya' ['A reliable buyer of Russian armaments'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 31 July – 6 August 2013, 29(497), pp. 6–7.

75 In June 2014, the Vietnamese Ambassador to Russia, Fam Suan Shon, noted that Russian warships would have priority visiting rights over other countries' navies. 'Vietnam Zayavil o Prioritetnom Prave Rossii na Ispol'zovanie Bazy Kamran' ['Vietnam stated Russia's priority rights over the use of the Cam Ranh base'], *Vzlyad*, 19 June 2014, online.

76 SV Kortunov, *Sovremennaya Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii. Strategiya Izbiratel'noi Vovlechennosti* [*Russia's contemporary foreign policy: the strategy of targeted involvement*], Gosugardtvenny Universitet Vusshei Shkoly Ekonomiki, Moscow, 2009, p. 334.

77 In particular, one of the highlights of the intensifying security dialogue with Thailand was the visit of Russia's Chief of Ground Forces, Colonel-General Oleg Saliukov, to Bangkok from 15 to 18 March 2017. 'Voennoe Sotrudnichestvo RF i Tailanda Stanovitsya Faktorom Stabil'nosti v ATR' ['Russia–Thailand defence cooperation is becoming a factor of stability in the Asia–Pacific region'], *RIA Novosti*, 20 March 2017, online.

78 'Rossiya i Filipiny Podpisali Vosem' Soglasheniy po Sotrudnichestvu' ['Russia and the Philippines signed eight cooperation agreements'], *RIA Novosti*, 24 May 2017, online.

79 Andrei Milenin, 'Shoigu Prizval Strany ASEAN k Voennomu Sotrudnichestvu' ['Shoigu has called on ASEAN states for military cooperation'], *Izvestia*, 26 April 2016, online.

80 *Rossiiskoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, April 2016, 4(144), p. 16; *Rossiiskoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, September 2016, 9(149), p. 10.

81 Vladimir Molchanov, Vadim Savitskiy, 'Coobshcha Protiv Nonykh Ugroz' ['Together against common threats'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 October 2017, pp. 1–2.

82 In 1992, Russia completed the withdrawal of its 100,000-strong operational group of forces from Mongolia. A Zagorskiy, Ostroukhov, 'Sokrashchenie Vooruzheniy i Mery Voennogo Doveriya v Rainone Granitsy SNG s KNR' [The reduction of armaments and measures of military confidence in the area of the CIS border with the PRC'], in *Razoruzhenie i Bezopasnost': 1997–1988. Rossiya i Mezhdunarodnaya Sistema Kontrolya nad Vooruzheniyami: Razvitie ili Raspad* [*Disarmament and Security, 1997–1998: Russia and the international system of armaments control: development or collapse*], Nauka, Moscow, 1997, p. 251.

83 *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 September 1999, p. 1.

84 Vitaliy Petrov, 'Peresilit' Liubogo Agressora' ['To overpower any aggressor'], *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 23 December 2016, p. 2.

85 Russia's ongoing capability upgrade of its strategic deterrent capability, including elements of the national ABM defence, isn't included in this category.

86 Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'Kursom Obnovlenya' ['By the course of renewal'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 26 May 2017, p. 2.

87 Tikhonov, 'Kursom Obnovlenya' ['By the course of renewal'], p. 2.

88 *Strategicheskoe Yadernoe Vooruzhenie Rossii* [*Russia's strategic nuclear armaments*], online; author's estimates.

89 '500 Edinits Voennoi Tekhniki Postupyat v VVO' ['500 items of military equipment will be received in the Eastern Military District'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 21 April 2014, online; Pasmurtsev, 'VVO: Intensivnost' Boyevoi Ucheby Povysilas'; Aleksandr Pinchuk, 'Perevooruzhenie Prodolzhaetsya' ['Rearmament continues'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 11 January 2017, p. 2; *RIA Novosti*, 27 November 2014; 'Dolya Sovremennykh Obraztsov Vooruzheniya v VVO Sostavlyaet 31 Protsent' ['The share of modern armaments in Eastern Military District is 31%'], *RIA Novosti*, 23 January 2016, online.

90 'Dolya Sovremennykh Obraztsov Vooruzheniya v VVO Sostavlyaet 31 Protsent'.

91 Andrei Gavrilenko, 'Sisteme Vooruzheniya – Novoe Kachestvo' ['New quality control to the systems of armaments'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 May 2017, p. 1.

92 Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'Armiya – Gordost' Rossii' ['The army is Russia's pride'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 February 2017, p. 2.

93 Tikhonov, 'Faktory Boegotovnosti', p. 1. According to initial plans, in 2016 the Eastern Military District was supposed to receive just over 600 new and upgraded items.

94 Pinchuk, 'Perevooruzhenie Prodolzhaetsya', p. 1.

95 'V Tsentral'nom, Vostochnom Okrugakh i Kaspiiskoi Flotilii' ['In Central and Eastern Military Districts and the Caspian Flotilla'], *Rossiiskoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, August 2017, 8(1960), p. 14.

96 'Tri Soedinenya VVO k Kontsu Goda Ukomplektuiut Kontraktnikami' ['Three military formations will be staffed with contract soldiers by the end of 2016'], *RIA Novosti*, 23 January 2016, online.

97 'Voiska VVO v 2017 Popolnili bolee 10 tys. Voennosluzhashchikh po Kontraktu' [Over 10,000 Contract Servicemen Reinforced Forces of the Eastern Military District'], *TASS*, 19 December 2017, online.

98 Tikhonov, 'Faktory Boegotovnosti', p. 1.

99 For more on battalion tactical groups, see Defense Intelligence Agency, *Russia military power: building a military to support great power aspirations*, 2017, pp. 52, 54–55, online.

100 'V Priamurskom Ob'edinenii VVO za God Provedeno bolee 200 Takticheskih Ucheniy' [' More than 200 tactical exercises were carried out in the army based in the Amur Province'], *RIA Novosti*, 16 November 2016, online.

101 Both the Malka and Tiulpan systems are capable of firing conventional and unconventional munitions; data collected by the author; Evgeniy Andreev, Bogdan Stepovoi, Aleksei Ramm, '"Bog Voiny" Narashchivayet Moshch' ['The God of War' Increases its Power], *Izvestia*, 14 December 2017, p. 6.

102 Oleg Surovtsev, 'Vsegda Vperedi, Vsegda na Peredovoi' [Always ahead, always at the frontline], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 November 2017, p. 6; Vladimir Pylayev, 'Artilleristy – V Chisle Luchshikh' [Gunners are among the best], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 November 2017, p. 6.

103 *RIA Novosti* (issues 2013–17); *TASS* (issues 2013–17); *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2013–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2013–17); data collected by the author.

104 Russian MoD.

105 Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'V Tsentre Vnimaniya – Obustroistvo Voisk' ['Settlement of troops is at the centre of attention'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 10 June 2015, p. 1.

106 Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'K Perevooruzheniu Gotovy' ['Ready for rearmament'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 11 June 2015, p. 3.

107 On 1 December 2016, the 90th Guards Vitebsk–Novgorod Tank Division became an operational shock unit within the Central Military District. Comprising three armoured, one motor-rifle and one mobile artillery regiments, the 90th Division is equipped with T-72B3 main battle tanks, BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, BTR-82A armoured personnel carriers and other equipment. Roman Azanov, Alina Imamova, 'Ural'skiy Tankovy Kulak Armii Rossii' ['The Urals armoured fist of Russia's army'], *TASS*, 1 December 2016, online. While its primary task is to be the stand-by shock element of the Russian military in the Central Asian strategic zone, the division can also act as a strategic reinforcement element to either the Western or Southern Military District, or the Eastern Military District, where it can operate side by side with the 5th Brigade.

108 This prognosis is also based on the fact that by 2020 Russia's military districts west of the Urals will have received a sufficient portion of advanced military hardware. New-generation systems will still be fielded with units of the Western and Southern military districts, while the Eastern Military District would be going through its large-scale capability upgrade phase.

109 A reference to these systems can be found in the interview with then Chief of the Logistical Support Directorate of the Eastern Military District, Colonel Victor Tarayev in Oleg Surovtsev, 'V Prioritete – Perevooruzhenie Voisk' ['Troops' rearmament is a priority'], *Suvorovskiy Natisk*, 5 March 2015, p. 2.

110 Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation would be responsible for additional specialised tasks and missions, which are detailed in the 'Power projection' section of this report.

111 'Sformirovana 11-ya Armiya VVS i PVO' ['The 11th Air Force and Air Defence Army was formed'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 7 August 2015, online.

112 'VKS Popolnyatsya Chetyrmya Novymi Samoletami Su-34' ['Air Space forces will receive four new Su-34 aircraft'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 19 May 2017, online; Anna Kuprina, 'Partiya Novykh Istrebitelei Su-34 Postupila v Khabarovskuiui Aviachast'' ['A shipment of new Su-34 fighters [the author of this article made a technical error] arrived in an Khabarovsk Aviation Unit'], *Izveztia*, 19 October 2017, online. The regiment is now fully re-equipped with 24 Su-34s, thus making it the third RusAF's bomber regiment to be re-equipped with Su-34s. The two regiments are the 47th Composite Air Regiment of the 105th Composite Air Division of the 6th Red Banner AF/AD Army, Western Military District (24 aircraft), and the 559th Independent Bomber Regiment of the 4th Red Banner AF/AD Army, Southern Military District (36 aircraft). Data collected by the author.

113 Data collected by the author. It's possible that the Russian Air Space Command may proceed with forming a stand-alone air regiment equipped with two squadrons of MiG-31BMs, as part of the 303rd Division.

114 Press service of the Eastern Military District, Russian MoD. It can be expected that the 18th Brigade will be fully re-equipped in 2018.

115 On the role of A2/AD in Russia's current defence planning, see Defense Intelligence Agency, *Russia military power: building a military to support great power aspirations*, p. 32.

116 The likely cause of such sudden rearmament of the newly formed 35th Air Defence Brigade was the escalation of the political–military situation on the Korean peninsula. The fielding of the highly mobile and fully autonomous Buk-M3 would significantly strengthen Russia's A2/AD in the Far East, and also against possible threats coming from the DPRK.

117 Both airbases are expected to be fully upgraded by 2019. 'Glavkom VKS: Neskol'ko Voennykh Aerodromov budut Rekonstruirovany v Blizhaishie Dva Goda' ['Chief of Air Space Forces: several airfields will be upgraded over the next two years,], *TASS*, 25 February 2017, online.

118 Ivan Dragomirov, 'Sevmorput' Ukreplyaetsya i Uteplyaetsya' ['The northern sea route is being reinforced and upgraded'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 14–20 June 2017, 22(686), p. 6.

119 'Glava Genshtaba Dovolen Rabotoi Strategicheskoi Aviatsii na Ucheniyakh v VVO' ['Chief of General Staff is satisfied with the performance of strategic aviation during exercises in the Eastern Military District'], *RIA Novosti*, 25 July 2013, online.

120 Konstantin Lobkov, Victor Hudoleev, 'Voiska Podnyaty po Trevoge' ['Troops are being placed on alert'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 13 September 2014, p.1. Russian Military Transport Aviation staged about 30 sorties involving more than 20 An-124 and Il-76 heavy lifters and An-26 and An-12 medium-range transports, which moved more than 1,200 personnel and about 200 tonnes of cargo from European Russia to the theatre. Lobkov, Hudoleev, 'Voiska Podnyaty po Trevoge', p.1; Konstantin Lobkov, Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'V Naznachennye Raiony' ['To the designated areas'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 September 2014, pp. 1–2.

121 Valeriy Gerasimov, 'Gotovnost' Voisk i Sil k Deistviyam v Raionakh Vozmozhnykh Krizisnykh Situatsiy Proverena na Praktike' ['The capacity of troops and forces to engage in area of potential crisis was tested'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 17–23 December 2014, 47(565), p. 3. Vostok 2014 remains one of the one of the largest single displays of military power in the entire IndAsPac region in recent years.

122 'Aviatsiya VKS Naletala Bolee 340 tys. Chasov za 2016 God' ['Aviation of military space forces flew over 340,000 hours'], *TASS*, 2 January 2017, online.

123 'Bolee 28 Tysyach Chasov Naletala Aviatsiya Vostochnogo Voennogo Okruga v 2016 Godu' ['Aviation of the Eastern Military District flew over 28,000 hours,], *TASS*, 14 December 2016, online.

124 Viktor Khudoleev, 'Dostigli Vysokikh Resul'tatov' ['Achieved high results'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 April 2017, p. 1.

125 'Sukhoputnye Voiska VVO Provedut v 2017 Godu bolee Tysyachi Ucheniy' ['Ground forces of the Eastern Military District will carry out over 1,000 exercises in 2017'], *RIA Novosti*, 1 December 2016, online.

126 'Sukhoputnye Voiska Rossii Provedut Shest' Mezhdunarodnykh Ucheniy v 2017 Godu' ['Russian ground forces will stage six international exercises in 2017'], *RIA Novosti*, 1 December 2016, online.

127 Defense Intelligence Agency, *Russia military power: building a military to support great power aspirations*, pp. 42–44.

128 According to open-source data, in mid-2017 the Udaloy-class RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov* was in refit; one Sovremenny-class DDG, RFS *Bezboyaznenny*, was in reserve awaiting possible reactivation; the Ushakov-class CGN, RFS *Admiral Lazarev*, was inactive but underwent an overhaul in 2015, which may point to plans for an eventual upgrade and full reactivation.

129 The task group consisted of three Nanuchka II-class corvettes (RFS *Inei*, RFS *Moroz* and RFS *Razliv*), MPK-82 and MPK-107 and the BT-325 minesweeper; *Morskoi Sbornik*, 2016, 9:9. A similar deployment was carried out in 2014. The Kamchatka Flotilla task group was operating off the Kurils and in the western parts of the Sea of Okhotsk.

130 Yuri Rossolov, 'Po Narastaiushchei Slozhnosti' ['By escalating complexity'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 October 2017, p. 4.

131 Evgeniy Podzorov, 'Po Signalu Trevogi' ['Upon the alarm signal'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 5 April 2017, p. 2.

132 Russian MoD.

133 *Morskoi Sbornik*, 2017, 4, pp. 13–14.

134 In 2017, four RUSPAC Akulas and two Oscar IIs were in refit; *RIA Novosti* (issues 2016–17), *TASS* (issues 2016–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2016–17); data collected by the author.

135 Among other factors, this prognosis is also based on the analysis of hydrographic operations of the Russian Navy in recent years (Table 7).

136 On 1 December 2014, Russia established the Arctic Command, which resides with its Northern Fleet.

137 Konstantin Lobkov, 'Kurs – na Pobedy' ['The course is towards victories'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 February 2017, p. 4.

138 The group comprised major surface combatants drawn from the Black Sea and Pacific fleets. It consisted of the Moskva-class guided-missile cruiser RFS *Moskva*, the Udaloy-class destroyers RFS *Admiral Panteleev* and RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov*, two guided-missile frigates, two amphibious ships with marines on board, a nuclear-powered attack submarine, and auxiliaries. The force staged joint exercises with the Indian Navy and engaged in live firing exercises with LRA elements. Igor Korotchenko, 'Potentsial Sokhranen' ['The potential is preserved'], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 2003, 17:1, 3. LRA deployed a force of six strategic aircraft (four Tu-95MS and two Tu-160), which reached the area by flying over Afghanistan and Pakistan. This was the largest deployment of Russia's strategic power to the Indian Ocean theatre since the Soviet worldwide naval manoeuvres Okean–70 and Okean–75.

139 The group comprised the RFS *Varyag* and destroyers RFS *Admiral Panteleev* and RFS *Admiral Tributs*, and was accompanied by auxiliaries; *Suvorovskiy Natisk*, 21 May 2011, p. 1.

140 *Morskoi Sbornik*, 2010, 6, p. 4.

141 'VMS Yaponii" VMF RF Vyshel v Vodakh Dal'nego Vostoka na Pik Aktivnosti za Poslednie 10 Let' ['The Japanese Navy: the Russian Navy has reached its peak of activity in Far Eastern waters over the past 10 years'], *TASS*, 10 January 2017, online.

142 According to General Shoigy, in 2016 the Russian Navy carried out 121 deployments; Sergei Shoigu, 'Platsdarmy i Rybezhi' ['Holding areas and boundaries'], *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 11–17 January 2017, 1(665), p. 4.

143 'Klintsevich Zayavil o Gotovnosti Rossii Sozdat' Bazu v Sudane' [Senator Klintsevich announced of Russia's readiness to set up a base in Sudan], RIA Novosti, 25 November 2017, online.

144 According to Korolev, Russian warships spent 15,600 days at sea in 2016; Igor Dygalo, Andrei Gavrilenko, 'Pod Andreevskim Flagom' ['Under the flag of St Andrew'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 October 2017, p. 2.

145 Dmitriy Semenov, Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'Armiya Rossii: Dinamika Razvitaya' [Army of Russia: Development Dynamics], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 8 November 2017, p. 3.

146 Konstantin Lobkov, 'Na More, Na Sushe i v Vosdukhe' ['At sea, on land and in the air'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 May 2017, p. 4.

147 'Korabli TOF Proveli v More v Chetyre Raza Bol'she Vremeni, chem Planirovalos' v 2017 Godu' [Pacific Fleet ships spent at sea four times more then planned in 2017], TASS, 5 December 2017, online.

148 Operations in 2003, 2009 and 2010 support his claim.

149 Russian warships (two guided-missile cruisers, two guided-missile destroyers, a guided-missile frigate and four to five auxiliaries, possibly supported by a at least one nuclear-powered attack submarine) formed three independent task groups.

150 Shoigu, 'Platsdarmy i Rybezhi', p. 4.

151 'Glavnoi Zadachei Dal'nei Aviatsii VVS Stanet Strategicheskoe Sderzhivanie' ['Strategic deterrence will become the main task of the Long Range Aviation'], *RIA Novosti*, 23 December 2014, online.

152 Yuri Rossolov, 'Mesto Sluzhby – Kamchatka' ['Kamchatka is the place of service'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 January 2017, p. 4.

153 Aleksandr Tikhonov, 'Nash Patrul' u Ekvatora' [Our patrol near the Ekvator], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 8 December 2017, p. 1.

154 The 72th Missile Brigade was formed on the basis of the 72nd Missile Regiment.

155 Yuri Rossolov, 'Na Samukh Dal'nikh Rubezhakh' [At the most remote boundaries], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 December 2017, p. 3.

156 Initially being the Far Eastern elements of the Soviet VDV, in 1996 both brigades were assigned to be under the command of the Eastern Military District. On 11 October 2013, they were returned to the VDV's organisational structure. 'Geographiya "Krylatoi Gvardii" Rasshiryaetsya' [The geography of the "Flying Guard" is expanding'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 October 2013, p. 2.

157 Lobkov, Hudoleev, 'Voiska Podnyaty po Trevoge', p. 1.

158 'Brigada VDV v Buryatii Poluchit vo II Kvartale 2017 goda Modernizirovannye BMD-2' ['The Airborne Brigade in Buryatiya will receive modernised BMD-2s in the second quarter of 2017'], *TASS*, 19 May 2017, online.

159 Lobkov, Rudenko, 'S Boyevym Nastroem', p. 5

160 Over the past six years, Russian military transport aviation has demonstrated its increased capacity to support large-scale airlift operations as well as to sustain prolonged contingencies, such as Syria. In the Far Eastern theatre, it is continuously involved in practising in-theatre force manoeuvre, as discussed above.

161 Russia's ability to mass rapid deployment forces (airborne troops and marines) was demonstrated during a number of exercises held in early 2017. For example, in late March, Russian VDV demonstrated flexible force response by massing more than 2,500 troops and about 600 items of heavy equipment in Crimea. Elements were redeployed from Russia's Caucasus and the country's central regions. Aleksandr Pinchuk, 'Krylataya Gvardiya na Peredovoi' ['The Flying Guard is at the front line'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 March 2017, p. 1.

162 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 and Black Sea fleets.

163 'Vostochny Voenny Okrug: ot Vintovki do Krylatykh Raket' ['The Eastern Military District: from a rifle to cruise missiles'], *RIA Novosti*, 31 July 2013, online.

164 'Na Morskikh Rubezhakh' ['On maritime frontiers'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 April 2017, p. 1.

165 Aleksei Ramm, Evgeniy Dmitriev, '"Kalibry" Zashchityat Dal'niy Vostok' ['The "Calibres" will defend the Far East'], *Izvestia*, 25 May 2017, pp. 1, 9.

166 Dmitriy Litovkin, Aleksei Ramm, '"Batony" Poluchat Universal'noe Oruzhie' ['The "Batons" will receive universal weapons'], *Izveztia*, 28 March 2017, online.

167 Dubbed 'Super Akulas' by the navy, the improved Akulas' new main armament suit would enable them to launch the Kalibrs, thus allowing them to engage in strike operations against land as well as performing their traditional roles as undersea superiority platforms. Dmitriy Litovkin, Aleksei Ramm, '"Superakuly" Vooruzhili "Kalibrami"' ['"Super Akulas" have been armed with "Calibres"'], I*zvestia*, 28 April 2017, p. 9.

168 Andrei Gavrilenko, 'K Mestu Postoyannogo Bazirovaniya' ['Back to the point of permanent basing'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 January 2017, p. 1. It's believed that B-187, which was built as an earlier variant of the Kilo class (Project 877), was upgraded to the level of the Improved Kilo (Project 636.3).

169 The RFS *Varyag* is scheduled to go through a major refit and modernisation after her sister ship RFS *Moskva* completes her refit; all Udaloys will go through a major capability upgrade aimed at increasing their multi-role capabilities; one to two Soveremmys (RFS *Bezboyaznenny* and RFS *Burny*) may be reactivated and brought back to full operational status. Data collected by the author.

170 Aleksei Ramm, Evgeniy Dmitriev, 'Opasnykh "Ovodov" Osnastili Sverkhtochnoi "Bagiroi"' ['Dangerous "Gadflys" are being equipped with highly accurate "Bagira"'], *Izveztia*, 16 October 2017, online.

171 Nikolai Surkov, Aleksei Ramm, '"Ovodov" Booruzhili "Uranom"' [The "Gadflys" are being Armed with the "Uran"], *Izvestia*, 21 December 2017, online.

172 Yuri Avdeev, 'Oruzhie, Nadezhnoe i Sovremennoe' ['Reliable and modern weaponry'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 May 2017, p. 2.

173 The first line of Russian landing platform docks were the three Project 1174 Ivan Rogov-class, two of which were deployed with SOVPAC.

174 Andrei Milenin, 'Minoborony: Rossiya Postroit Svoi Vertoletonostsy po Tinu "Mistralei"' [Ministry of Defence: Russia will build its own helicopter carriers similar to the Mistrals], *Izvestia*, 25 May 2017, online. Later, it was announced that Russia will build two diesel-gas-turbine landing platform docks. The first unit is expected to be commissioned in 2024, followed by the second vessel in 2026. 'Istochnik: Rossiya do 2027 goda Postroit Dva Desantnykh Vertoletonostsa' ['Source: Russia will build two amphibious helicopter carriers by 2027', *TASS*, 31 May 2017, online.

175 'Shoigu: VVO Polushit do 2020 Goda 13 Tys. Edinits Tekhniki' [Shoigu: The Eastern Military District will receive 13,000 pieces of equipment by 2020], *RIA Novosti*, 25 June 2014, online.

176 Semenov, Tikhonov, 'Armiya Rossii: Dinamika Razvitaya', p. 3; Appendix 1.

177 Rob Harris, 'Former Prime Minister Paul Keating told Russian spy ring penetrated ASIO', *Herald Sun*, 31 December 2016, online.

178 Cameron Stewart, 'Russian spies in Australia at "near Cold War level"', *The Australian*, 17 March 2009, online.

179 Andrew Cosh, 'Russia's security influence in Northeast Asia', in *Indo-Pacific strategic digest 2015*, Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College, 2015, p. 221.

180 *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, pdf

181 Cosh, 'Russia's security influence in Northeast Asia', p. 220.

182 Defense Intelligence Agency, *Russia military power: building a military to support great power aspirations*, p. 13.

APPENDIX

Table A1: New major military units formed/due to be formed in the Eastern Military District, 2016 to 2018

Month, year	Units	Area of basing	Mission	Details
Ground forces				
December 2016	3rd Missile Brigade	Chita region	Enhancing strike capabilities of the 29th Army.	The 4th Missile Brigade of the Eastern Military District was armed with ageing Tochka-U SSMs.[a] The brigade is expected to be fully rearmed with the Iskander-M SSM before the end of 2017.[b]
2017	Two automobile battalions of heavy towtrucks	Khabarovsk, Chita	Supporting quick force manoeuvre within the assigned theatre.	Both battalions are equipped with KAMAZ 65225 platforms.[c] It's expected that each Russian military district will have a special regiment of heavy towtrucks by 2020 (>600 KAMAZ 65225 in each regiment).
2017	Formation of a new unspecified division	Kurils	Coastal defence of the Kurils.[d]	If this new formation will be stationed in the Kurils alongside the 18th MGA-Div and won't be assigned to RUSPAC; operationally, it will come under the command of the 68th Corps.
Air force and air defence				
End of 2016	Transformation of the 6953rd Red Banner Sevastopol-Berlin combined air base in to a stand-alone heavy bomber division	Ukrainka (Amur region) and Belaya (Irkutsk region) air bases	Aerial patrols over the Pacific maritime theatre (Japan, Hawaii and Guam; operations off the US Pacific coast and over the Arctic; anti-aircraft-carrier warfare; strategic nuclear deterrence.	The newly formed heavy bomber division is likely to comprise two bomber regiments armed with Tu95MSs and two additional regiments with Tu-22M3s (approximately 70 aircraft).[e]
1 December 2016	35th Air Defence Brigade of the 36th Army	Ulan Ude, Buryatiya	Mobile area AD; flexible response to contingencies across the Eastern Military District.	The newly formed unit was armed with 9K317 Buk-M2 medium-range AD systems and was assigned to the 36th Army (Ulan Ude). However, by mid-2017, the 35th Air Defence Brigade was fully rearmed with the advanced 9K37M3 Buk-M3 medium-range AD system.[f]
2017	Formation of the 18th military transport aviation division	Orengurg	Rapid airlift support to all Russian military districts, as well as assistance with in-theatre force manoeuvre and out-of-area deployments.	The newly formed division will be equipped with modernised Il-76MDMs as well as new Il-76MD-90As.[g]

2017	18th Brigade of the Army Aviation (rotary)	Khabarovsk	Mobile force projection within the assigned theatre; supporting quick force manoeuvre within the assigned theatre.	The newly formed brigade will comprise four helicopter squadrons (two combat equipped with Ka-52s and two transport equipped with Mi-8AMTShChs) and onre heavy lift flight equipped with Mi-26s). An army aviation brigade will be assigned about 100 aircraft.[h]
2017	112th Independent Helicopter Regiment (Army Aviation)	Chita	Mobile force projection within the assigned theatre; supporting operations of armoured and mechanised units.	The newly formed regiment is being formed on the basis of the 439th air base. It will comprise at least one squadron of Mi-28NM Night Super-Hunter assault helicopters, and two squadrons of Mi-8AMTShChs).[i]
Russian Pacific Fleet				
2018	A new AF/AD Army	Kamchatka	AD and ABM defence of the Kamchatka, Chukotka, RUSPAC's area of responsibility in the Arctic, the Kurils.	The newly formed army will comprise at least two divisions (one air division and the 53rd AD division)[j]. It can be expected that more units will be formed to support the new army.
2018	A new coastal defence division	Chukotka	Securing the Bering Strait and offering power support to Russian operations in the Arctics zone of responsibility of RUSPAC.[k]	At this stage, it's unclear whether the formation of a new division would result in the numerical expansion of the naval infantry (marine) force deployed in the Pacific, or be limited to the introduction of core missile and AD capabilities in the designated area of operations.
2018	The transformation of the 7060th air base in to a stand-alone unmanned aerial vehicle regiment	Kamchatka	Reconnaissance and targeting, aerial patrol, and environmental control.	The future regiment will comprise squadrons of the Forpost (Searcher II) and Orlan-10 unmanned aerial vehicles.[l] Similar regiments will be formed in the Black Sea and Northern fleets.[m] The formation of such regiments in the Russian Navy is part of its strategy to improve coastal defence capability and a response to the growing trend to network-centric operations, which has become a major feature of the Russian military.

a The formation of the 4th Missile Brigade means that all armies of the Eastern Military District have specially assigned missile brigades, significantly enhancing their combined striking capability. With the formation of the 3rd Brigade, the Eastern Military District became the only district that's armed with four tactical missile brigades.

b Aleksei Ramm, Dmitriy Litovkin, Evgenie Andreev, '"Tochku" Postavyat v 2020 Godu' ['The "Tochka" will be discharged by 2020'], *Izvestia*, 2 June 2017, p. 1.

c Aleksei Ramm, Dmitriy Litovkin, Evgeniy Andreev, 'Tanki Povezut na "Velosipedakh"' ['Tanks will be carried by "bicycles"'], *Izvestia*, 21 June 2017, p. 4. The Russian military often refer to heavy tow-trucks as 'bicycles'.

d *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 1–7 March 2017, 8(672), p. 1.

e Aleksei Ramm, Nikolai Surkov, 'V Rossii Sformirovana Novaya Diviziya Tyazhelykh Bombardirovshchikov' ['A new heavy bomber division was formed in Russia'], *Izvestia*, 6 October 2016, online. It's likely that the newly formed bomber division will be designated as either the 326th or 178th.

f Aleksei Ramm, Dmitriy Litovkin, Nikolai Surkov, 'Dal'niy Vostok Prikryli "Bukami"—Robotami' ['The Far East is now shielded by BUKs—the robots'], *Izvestia*, 13 June 2017, pp. 1, 9.

g Aleksandr Pinchuk, 'Truzheniki Neba' ['Workers of the sky'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 31 May 2017, p. 3.

h Aleksey Ramm, Evgeniy Dmitriev, Evgeniy Andreev, 'Armeiskaya Aviatsiya Nabirayet Vysotu' [Army Aviation is picking up altitude], *Izvestia*, 29 June 2017, pp. 1–2.

i '"Superokhotniki" Letyat v Zabaikalie' [The Super Hunters are flying to the Trans-Baikal region], *Izvestia*, 12 July 2017, p. 5.

j Sergei Val'chenko, Aleksei Ramm, Evgeniy Andreev, 'Vozhdushny Shchit dlya Dal'nego Vostoka' [Air Shield for the Far East], *Izveztia*, 18 December 2017, pp. 1, 3.

k Andrei Gavrilenko, 'Obespechivaya Natsionalnuiu Bezopasnost'' ['By supporting national security'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 August 2016, p. 2.

l Yuri Rossolov '"Orlany" nad Vulkanami' ['The "Orlans" over Volcanoes'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 14 February 2016, p. 5.

m Aleksei Ramm, 'U Voennykh Moryakov Poyavyatsya Bespilotnye Polki' ['Military seamen will receive regiments of unmanned aerial vehicles'], *Izveztia*, 28 March 2017, online.

Table A2: Russian Pacific Fleet support operations in the Mediterranean, 2013 to 2017

Month, year	Operational unit(s)	Mission
2013–2014	Udaloy-class RFS *Admiral Panteleev* DDG Ropucha II-*class LST* RFS *Peresvet and* RFS *Admiral Nevel'skiy* RFS *Fotiy Krylov* ocean-going tug	Provided core capability to the newly formed Mediterranean Squadron; RFS *Admiral Panteleev* acted as a flagship.
November 2013 – 2014	Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag*	Operations in the Mediterranean; shadowing the US 6th Fleet.
September – December 2015	RFS *Sayny* ocean-going rescuer	Support operations in the Mediterranean; transferred to the Black Sea Fleet in December 2015.
January – July 2016	Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag*	Acted as a flagship of the Mediterranean Squadron; maritime AD of Russia's Hmeimim air base in Latakia.
February – April 2017	RFS *Irtysh* hospital ship	Support operations in the Mediterranean.

Source: *RIA Novosti* (issues 2013–17), *TASS* (issues 2013–17); *Morskoi Sbornik* (issues 2013–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2013–17); *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2013–17); data is collected by the author.

Table A3: Major naval units under construction for the Russian Pacific Fleet

Platform	Project, class, type of platform (number ordered)	Vessels	Operational
Submarines	Project 955 Borey A-class SSBNs (2) Displacement: 14,720/24,000 tonnes	RFS *Generalissimus Suvorov* RFS *Imperator Aleksandr III*	2019 2020
	Project 855 Severodvinsk-class SSN/SSGN (3+) Displacement: 8,600/13,800 tonnes	RFS *Novosibirsk* RFS *Krasnoyarsk* RFS *Perm'*	2019 2020 2020
	Project 636.3 *Varshavyanka* SSK (6) Displacement: 2,350/3,950 tonnes	RFS *Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy* RFS *Volkhov* RFS *Magadan* RFS *Ufa* RFS *Mozhaisk* RFS not named	2019 2020 2021 2021 2022 2022
Surface combatants	Project 22350 Gorshkov-class FFG(H) (1+) Displacement: 5,400 tonnes (full)	RFS *Admiral Flota Sovetskogo Soiuza Isakov*	2020
	Project 22380 Steregyshchiy-class guided-missile corvettes (3 +2) Displacement: 2,220 tonnes (full)	RFS *Gromkiy* RFS *Geroi Rossiiskoi Federatsii Aldar Tsydenzhapov* RFS *Rezskiy*	2018 2019 2020
	Project 22385 Gremyashchiy-class guided-missile corvettes (2+2) Displacement: 2,220 tonnes (full)	RFS *Gremyashchiy* RFS *Provorny*	2018 2019
	Project 22800 Karakurt-class guided-missile corvettes (6) Displacement: 800 tonnes	Construction to commence in 2018	
	Project 12700 Georgiy Kurbatov-*class* minehunters (7) Displacement: 890 tonnes	Construction to commence in 2018	
Major auxiliaries	Project 23130M ocean-going replenishment oiler (1) Displacement: 29,000 tonnes	Contract for the construction to be signed in 2017	2020
	Project 23131 Akademik Kashin-class ocean-going oiler (1) Displacement: 12,000 tonnes	RFS not named	2019
	Project 23120 Elbrus-class ocean-going supply ship with an ice-breaking capability (1) Displacement: 10,000 tonnes	RFS *Kapitan Shechenko*	2018
	Project 22010 ocean-going oceanographic research vessel (1) Displacement: 5,200 tonnes	RFS *Almaz*	2019
	Project 03182 small ocean-going oiler (2) Displacement: 3,500 tonnes	RFS *Mikhail Barskov* Shipbuilding number 9002	2018 2019
	Project 19910 hydrographic ship (1) Displacement: 1,227 tonnes	RFS *Aleksandr Rogotskiy*	2019
Maritime Border Guards of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation			
Major units	Project 22100 Okean patrol frigate (1+) Displacement: 2,700 tonnes (full)	Shipbuilding number 112	2020
	Project 22460 Okhotnik patrol corvette[a] (1) Displacement: 630 tonnes	RFS *Dozorny*	

a Project 22460 platforms can be equipped with 3M24 Uran missile systems.

Source: *Jane's Fighting Ships* (editions 2009–10 to 2016–17); *Voenno-Promyshlenny Kurier* (issues 2015–17); *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie* (issues 2016–17); *RIA Novosti* (issues 2009–17), *TASS* (issues 2009–17); *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issues 2010–17); data is collected by the author.

Table A4: Reported Russian navy port calls in the Indo-Pacific strategic maritime theatre, 2014 to 1 November 2017

	2014	2015	2016	1 November 2017
Northeast Asia				
China	20–22 May: Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag*, Sovremenny-class DDG RFS *Bystry*, Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, Ropucha II-class LST RFS *Admiral Nevelskiy*, RFS *Ilim* and RFS *Kalar* (auxiliaries), port of Wusong. Taking part in the Naval Interaction 2014 bilateral exercises; out-of-area operations.		17–21 January: Sovremenny-class DDG RFS *Bystry*, RFS *Boris Butoma* and RFS *Altai* visited port of Shanghai. Out-of-area operations. Arrived 12 September: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Tributs* and RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*, Ropucha II-class LSTs RFS *Peresvet*, RFS *Pechenga* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliaries), port of Zhanjian. Out-of-area operations; taking part in the Naval Interaction 2016 bilateral exercises.	2–6 June: Moskva-class CGs RFS *Varyag* and RFS *Pechenga* visited Hong Kong. Out-of-area operations.
South Korea: Busan				18 January: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Tributs* and RFS *Admiral Panteleev*, RFS *Boris Butoma*. Out-of-area operations. 11–14 April: RFS *Varyag* and RFS *Pechenga*. Out-of-area operations; response to Korean crisis.
Japan: Maizuru				21–23 January: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Tributs* and RFS *Admiral Panteleev*, RFS *Boris Butoma*. Out-of-area operations; taking part in the SAREX bilateral naval exercise.

	2014	2015	2016	1 November 2017
Southeast Asia				
Cambodia: Sihanoukville		24–28 April: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, RFS *Pechenga* and an SB-522 tug. Out-of-area operations.	25–27 April: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*, RFS *Irkut* and RFS *Fotiy Krylov*.(auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations.	
Vietnam: Cam Ranh Bay	17–20 June: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov*, RFS *Irkut* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations. 25–28 August: RFS *Antarktida* (hydrographic vessel). Hydrographic operations.	Arrived on 14 February: Udaloy-class RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, RFS *Pechenga* (ocean-going oiler) and an SB-522 tug. Out-of-area operations.	2–5 May: RFS *Marshal Gelovani* (hydrographic vessel). Hydrographic operations. Departed 23 August: Project 21300S RFS *Igor Belousov* (ocean-going rescuer). Transferring to the Pacific Fleet.	27 April–1 May: Moskva-class RFS *Varyag*, RFS *Pechenga* and RFS *Fotiy Krylov* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations. 25–28 May: RFS *Irtysh* (hospital ship). Returning from deployment to the Mediterranean.
Vietnam: Danang		31 July – 2 August: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, and RFS *Pechenga* and SB-522 tug (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations.	6–9 January: Sovremenny-class RFS *Bystry*, RFS *Boris Butoma* and RFS *Altai* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations.	
Philippines: Manila		May 2016: RFS *Marshal Gelovani*. (hydrographic vessel). Hydrographic operations.		3–6 January: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Tributs* and RFS *Boris Butoma* (auxiliary). Out-of-area operations. 20–24 April: Moskva-class CGs RFS *Varyag* and RFS *Pechenga.* Out-of-area operations. 20–26 October: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Panteleyev* and RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*, RFS *Boris Butoma* (auxiliary) visited Muara port. Out-of-area operations.
Thailand		1–5 March: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Panteleyev* and RFS *Pechenga*, SB-522 tug (auxiliary). Out-of-area operations.	1–11 September: RFS *Irtysh* (hospital ship) took part in the joint SMOA-PLUS exercises. Forward presence. 1–5 December: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Tributs* and RFS *Boris Butoma* (auxiliary) visited port of Sattahip. Out-of-area operations; taking part in the INDRA-2016 bilateral exercises.	5–9 May: Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag* and RFS *Pechenga* (auxiliary) visited port of Sattahip. Out-of-area operations.

	2014	2015	2016	1 November 2017
Indonesia	5–9 November: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* and RFS *Kola* (auxiliary) (Baltic Fleet)[a] visited port of Jakarta. Forward presence.		12–18 April: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Vinogradov* and RFS *Irkut* and the RFS *Fotiy Krylov* (auxiliaries) visited port of Padang. Out-of-area operations; taking part in the Komodo international naval exercise. 1–7 November: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Tributs*, Sovremenny-class DDG RFS *Bystry* and RFS *Boris Butoma* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliaries) visited Tanjung Priok port. Out-of-area operations; taking part in the Indo Defence international exposition.	23–25 May: Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag* and RFS *Pechenga* (auxiliary) visited Tanjung Priok port. Out-of-area operations.
Brunei: Muara			2–4 May: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Vinogradov* and RFS *Irkut* and RFS *Fotiy Krylov* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations; en route to join the international naval exercise ADMM-PLUS 2016.	12–15 October: Udaloy-class DDGs RFS *Admiral Panteleyev* and RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*, RFS *Boris Butoma* (auxiliary) visited Muara port. Out-of-area operations; taking part in the PASSEX 2017 exercise.
Singapore: Changi Base	31 October–3 November: Moskva-class RFS *Moskva* (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence. 13–17 November: RFS *Kola* (ocean-going oiler; Baltic Fleet). Forward presence. 8–11 December: Moskva-class CG RFS *Moskva* (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence.	Date unspecified: RFS *Sayany* (ocean-going rescuer). Deployment to the Mediterranean. 21–25 July: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, RFS *Pechenga* and SB-522 tug (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations.	5–8 May: Udaloy-class RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*, RFS *Fotiy Krylov* and RFS *Irkut*. Out-of-area operations. 4 June: Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag*. Out-of-area operations; supporting Russia's involvement in the SLD-16. Departed 18 August: Project 21300S RFS *Igor Belousov* (ocean-going rescuer). Transferring to the Pacific Fleet.	16–19 May: Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag* and RFS *Pechenga* (auxiliary). Out-of-area operations; taking part in the Imdex Asia 2017 international exposition.
Malaysia	14–18 November: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* and RFS *Kola* (auxiliary) (Baltic Fleet) visited port of Penang. Forward presence.	17–22 March: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, RFS *Pechenga* and SB-522 tug (auxiliaries) visited port of Langkawi. Out-of-area operations; taking part in an annual naval exposition.		18–23 May: RFS *Irtysh* (hospital ship) visited port of Langkawi. Returning from deployment to the Mediterranean.
Myanmar			18–22 May: Udaloy-class RFS *Admiral Vinogradov*, RFS *Irkut* and RFS *Fotiy Krylov* (auxiliaries) visited Yangon. Out-of-area operations.	

	2014	2015	2016	1 November 2017
Indian Ocean				
Sri Lanka: Colombo	6–8 June: Udaloy-class RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov*, RFS *Irkut* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations. 23–24 October: Moskva-class CG RFS *Moskva* (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence. 26–27 October: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* and RFS *Kola* (auxiliary) (Baltic Fleet). Forward presence. 24–28 November: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* (Baltic Fleet). Forward presence. 26–27 October: RFS *Kola* (ocean-going oiler) (Baltic Fleet). Forward presence.	29 March–1 April: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Panteleyev*, RFS *Pechenga* and SB-522 tug (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations. 23–26 September: RFS *Epron* (submarine rescuer) (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence.	3–5 March: RFS *Epron* (submarine rescuer) (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence. 29 July–1 August: Project 21300S RFS *Igor Belousov* (ocean-going rescue ship). Transferring to the Pacific Fleet.	14–17 June: RFS *Nadezhda* (training frigate). At-sea training.
India: Visakhapatham		October (date not specified): RFS *Epron* (submarine rescuer) (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence. 6–12 December: Moskva-class CG RFS *Varyag*, Sovremenny-class DDG RFS *Bystry*, RFS *Boris Butoma* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations; taking part in INDRA-2015 exercises.	Departed 8 March: RFS *Epron* (submarine rescuer) (Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence. 3–6 August: Project 21300S RFS *Igor Belousov* (ocean-going rescue ship). Transferring to the Pacific Fleet; assisted in searching for Indian Air Force An-32 plane that missing over Bay of Bengal on 22 July 22. 14–21 December: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Admiral Tributs*, Sovremenny-class DDG RFS *Bystry* and RFS *Boris Butoma* (auxiliary). Out-of-area operations; taking part in INDRA-2016 exercises.	

	2014	2015	2016	1 November 2017
Pakistan: Karachi	19–23 April: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliary). Out-of-area operations. 16–22 October: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* and RFS *Kola* (auxiliary) (Baltic Fleet). Forward presence.	4–6 December: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Vice-Admiral Kulakov* (Northern Fleet). Forward presence.		9–15 February: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet). Forward presence; taking part in the AMAN 2017 bilateral naval exercise.
Seychelles: Port Victoria	Departed 9 June: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Marshal Shaposhnikov*, RFS *Irkut* and RFS *Alatau* (auxiliaries). Out-of-area operations.	15–17 December: RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel) (Baltic Fleet). Hydrographic operations.		28 February–4 March: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet), RFS *Altai* rescue tug vessel and RFS *Dubna* (ocean-going oiler) (Northern Fleet). Forward presence. 23–26 October: Project 22010 RFS *Yantar* (oceanographic vessel) (Northern Fleet). Hydrographic operations/ special operations.
Madagascar		Date not specified (possibly December): RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; (Baltic Fleet). Hydrographic operations.		
Mauritius: Port Louis				30 October–1 November: Project 22010 RFS *Yantar* (oceanographic vessel) (Northern Fleet). Hydrographic operations/ special operations.
Mozambique		Date not specified (possibly December): RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; (Baltic Fleet) visited port of Maputo. Hydrographic operations.		18 March: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet), RFS *Altai* (rescue tug vessel) and RFS *Dubna* (ocean-going oiler) (Northern Fleet), made a one-day port call to the port of Pemba. Forward presence.
Tanzania: Dar es Salaam				7–10 March: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet), RFS *Altai* (rescue tug vessel) and RFS *Dubna* (ocean-going oiler; Northern Fleet). Forward presence (first time when units of the Northern Fleet visited Tanzania).

	2014	2015	2016	1 November 2017
South Africa: Cape Town			2–4 January: RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; Baltic Fleet). Hydrographic operations. 6–8 March: RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; Baltic Fleet). Hydrographic operations.	Arrived 20 March: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet), RFS *Altai* (rescue tug vessel) and RFS *Dubna* (ocean-going oiler; Northern Fleet). Forward presence.
Djibouti		Arrived 12 April: RFS *Priazovye* (intelligence gatherer; Black Sea Fleet) arrived with evacuees from Yemen. Special operations in the Indian Ocean. 11–12 September: RFS *Epron* (rescuer; Black Sea Fleet). Forward presence.	Departed 18 August: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* (Baltic Fleet). Forward presence.	Early 2017 (date not specified): RFS *Irtysh* (hospital ship). Returning back from the Mediterranean. 12–14 June: RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; Baltic Fleet). Hydrographic operations. 12–13 July: RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; Baltic Fleet). Hydrographic operations.
Persian (Arabian) Gulf				
Iran			Arrived 19 November: Project 22010 RFS *Yantar* (oceanographic research vessel; Northern Fleet) called on the port of Bandar Abbas. Special operations in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf.	
Saudi Arabia		29 November–6 December: RFS *Admiral Vladimirsky* (oceanographic vessel; Baltic Fleet) visited port of Jeddah. Hydrographic operations.		
Oman: Salah	5–8 December: RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* (Baltic Fleet). Forward presence.	12–15 January: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet). Forward presence. Departed 30 November: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Vice Admiral Kulakov* (Northern Fleet). Forward presence. Date unspecified. RFS *Sayany* (ocean-going rescuer). Deployment to the Mediterranean.	18–21 July: Project 21300S RFS *Igor Belousov* (ocean-going rescuer). Transferring to the Pacific Fleet. Departed 6 September: Neustrashimy-class FFG RFS *Yaroslav Mudry* left the port of Salalah. Forward presence.	Departed 7 February: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Severomorsk* (Northern Fleet). Forward presence; en route to the AMAN 2017 exercise. 5–7 September: Udaloy-class DDG RFS *Vice Admiral Kulakov* (Northern Fleet). Forward presence.

a Units assigned to other Russian fleets (Baltic, Black Sea and Northern) are with a reference to a specific fleet.

Sources: MoD; *TASS* (issues 2014 to 2017); *INTERFAX* (issues 2014 to 2017); *Morskoi Sbornik* (issues 2014 to 2017); *Naval Today* (issues 2014 to 2017).

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2/AD	anti-access/area-denial
ABM	antiballistic missile
AD	air defence
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADMM	ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting
AF/AD	air force and air defence
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States
APEC	Asia–Pacific Economic Forum
ArMI	International Army Games
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	antisubmarine warfare
BMD	*boevaya mashina desanta*
BMP	*boyevaya mashina pekhoty*
CG	guided-missile cruiser
DDG	guided-missile destroyer
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EMERCOM	The Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters
GDP	gross domestic product
IndAsPac	Indo-Asia–Pacific
LRA	long-range aviation
LST	landing ship tank
MARID	Maritime Doctrine
MIN-DEF	ministers of defence
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBC	Nuclear, biological, chemical

OMON	*otryad militsii osobogo naznacheniya* [special purpose police unit]
OSK	*operativno-strategicheskoe kommandovanie* [operational–strategic command]
PFNA	Pacific Fleet Naval Aviation
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	PLA Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRO	*protivoraketnaya oborona* [anti-missile defence]
RFASF	Russian Federation Air Space Force
RFS	Russian Federation Ship
ROK	Republic of Korea
RusAF	Russian Armed Forces
RUSPAC	Russian Pacific Fleet
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SAP	State Armaments Program
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SCS	South China Sea
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SLCM	submarine-launched cruise missile
SLOC	sea lines of communication
SOBR	*spetsialny otryad bystrogo reagirovaniya* [special rapid response unit]
SOVPAC	Soviet Pacific Fleet
SSBN	nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine
SSGN	nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine
SSK	diesel–electric attack submarine
SSM	surface-to-surface missile
SSN	nuclear-powered attack submarine
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defence
UN	United Nations
VDV	*vozdushno desantnye voiska* [airborne troops]
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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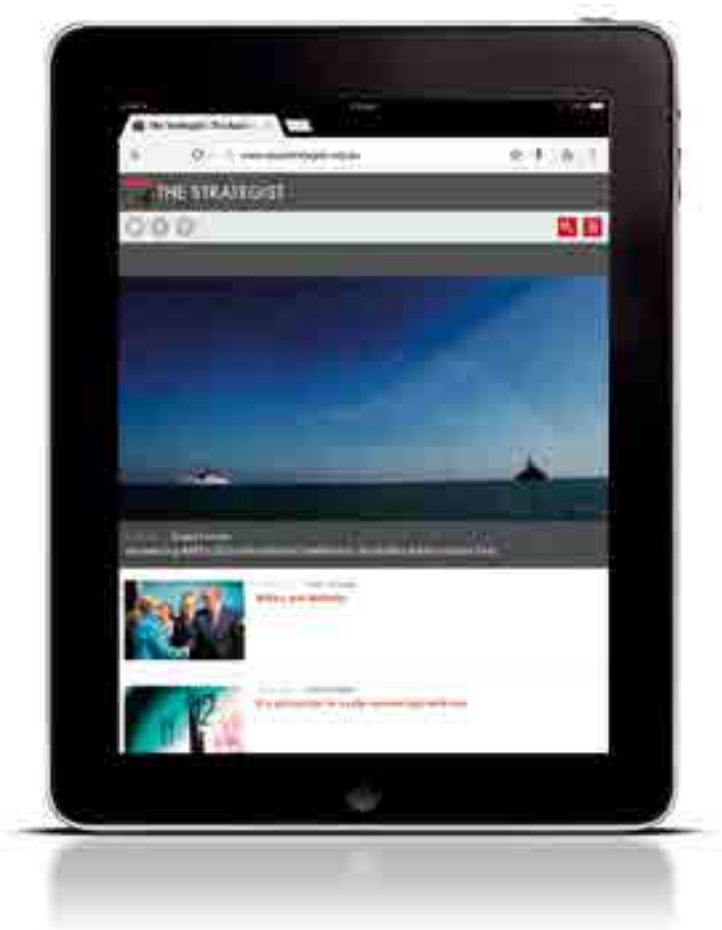

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