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Russian Navy to Be Permanently Present in Mediterranean

By The Moscow Times

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The Russian Navy will keep a permanent squadron of five to six ships in the Mediterranean Sea in order to protect its interests in the area, Russian Navy Chief Admiral Viktor Chirkov told the Zvezda television channel.

The squadron will be comprised of frigates, cruisers and support vehicles and will be subordinate to the Black Sea Fleet command. It will be armed with advanced ships built as part of the ambitious state armaments program, which provides for a complete overhaul of the Russian military by 2020.

The decision to deploy a permanent task force in the Mediterranean was announced by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on March 11.

Senator Viktor Ozerov confirmed the plans on March 15, telling a group of more than 60 military attaches from 48 countries, including key NATO members the United States

and Britain, that the naval force would "solve tasks for our state, of course, following all international laws."

Chirkov also said that Russia is ready to re-establish its Navy presence in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

Russia closed its naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam in 2002. On March 4, Shoigu visited Vietnam to discuss military-technical cooperation. Earlier in July, Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang announced that Vietnam would allow Russia to re-establish its presence at the base.

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