

Black Sea Fleet to Form Core of New Mediterranean Unit

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian sailors marking the 230th anniversary of the Black Sea Fleet on their ships in Sevastopol on Sunday.

Navy commander Viktor Chirkov said ships from the Black Sea Fleet will form the foundation of a new grouping that will be permanently deployed in the Mediterranean Sea.

"We are now forming the core staff," Admiral Chirkov said on the sidelines of a weekend celebration of the Black Sea Fleet's 230th anniversary in Sevastopol.

"The main staff will consist of 20 officers, mainly from the Black Sea Fleet," he said, Interfax reported.

He said the Mediterranean group will include ships from the Northern, Baltic and probably Pacific fleets, but the foundation will be Black Sea Fleet ships because the Mediterranean Sea falls within its realm of responsibility.

Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko, who also attended the Sunday celebration, said Navy ships have had a continuous presence in the Mediterranean for more than half a year and their continued presence was important for Russia.

"It's no secret that the Mediterranean region is the world's political kitchen these days," she told reporters. "We need our own chef in this kitchen, preparing meals that take into account national traditions and the interests of various countries."

Matviyenko also said the Black Sea Fleet has served as a guarantor of peace and stability in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean region since Catherine the Great formed it and gave it this task in 1783. "And no one has changed the fleet's task," she said.

The Black Sea Fleet celebrates its official holiday on Monday.

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