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3rd New Nuclear Missile Submarine Set to Join Russian Navy

By The Moscow Times

November 21, 2014



The K-551 Vladimir Monomakh submarine.

Amid a buildup of Moscow's naval power, the Russian navy is set to commission its third brand new Borei-class nuclear missile submarine, the K-551 Vladimir Monomakh, a senior Defense Ministry source was quoted as saying by the TASS news agency on Friday.

The navy's flag will be raised over the boat on Dec. 19, marking its official induction into the fleet four months after completing sea trials, the source said, although the boat will be signed over to the navy on Dec. 10.

The Borei-class submarines are Russia's next-generation "boomers" — large submarines packed with nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that lurk in the safety of the ocean depths, ensuring that Russia will always have a reserve of missiles to fire at its enemies if its land-based strategic nuclear forces are obliterated.

But in this role, the Boreis have struggled to make their mark. Delays in the development of the Bulava-type ICBMs that the new submarines were designed to carry have prevented the vessels from being strategically relevant and useful to the navy.

The missile, which has been in development since 2009, was successfully test fired by the Monomakh in September, but is still several successful launches away from incorporation into Russia's armory.

The Boreis — capable of carrying up to 12 missiles — are post-Soviet Russia's replacement for the aging Typhoon- and Delta IV-class boats, which were an integral part of the Soviet Union's nuclear deterrence force. Russia plans on building at least eight of the new ships.

The navy has also ordered eight next-generation hunter-killer submarines, known as the Yasen class, which hunt enemy submarines and surface ships.

Together, Russia's new submarine fleet aspires to reclaim Russia's role as a major player on the high seas. But this goal will be elusive, as Russia's surface fleet has so far not enjoyed the same level of investment as its submarine fleet.

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