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Russian Navy Plans Atomic-Powered Destroyer

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's Navy is seeking to use nuclear power to fuel its new destroyer-class vessels, Navy Chief Admiral Viktor Chirkov was quoted by Interfax as saying at a press conference in St. Petersburg on Friday.

While the new warships are still in the design process, "the main priority is to [create] a nuclear-powered destroyer," the admiral said.

Nuclear-powered destroyers remain a novel concept in naval technology. Nuclear reactors are typically reserved for vessels that remain at sea for extended periods of time, such as aircraft carriers and submarines.

Although destroyer-class vessels are not precluded from similar long-term deployments,

they are usually powered by conventional petroleum fuels, which require them to stop at overseas naval bases to refuel.

But as Russia does not have any major naval refueling facilities beyond its shores, nuclear power is an attractive option for Moscow, which is keen to increase its global reach.

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Under President Vladimir Putin's ambitious rearmament program, though, the navy is looking to reverse its fortune with the construction of a brand-new fleet. Several submarines have already been built, and by 2050 Russia hopes to construct a completely new oceangoing surface fleet of destroyers, cruisers and perhaps even an aircraft carrier.

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