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Russia Plans New Aircraft Carrier Amid Military Buildup

By The Moscow Times

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Russia will build a new aircraft carrier as part of the country's ongoing military buildup, navy Chief Admiral Viktor Chirkov confirmed on Monday.

"There will be an aircraft carrier in the navy. Work is being conducted by the relevant research organizations," Chirkov was quoted by the TASS news agency as saying. He did not give a timeline for the vessel's construction.

Russia only has one aircraft carrier in its navy — the Admiral Kuznetsov, which was commissioned in 1991. However, it is considered to be outdated and has suffered a number of technical failures that limit its practical use.

"The Russian navy needs an aircraft carrier that has tactical and technical characteristics for today and the future," Chirkov said.

Last October, navy deputy head Viktor Bursuk told news agency RIA Novosti that a new aircraft carrier should be launched after 2030.

Aircraft carriers are expensive. While American super-carriers can cost up to $13 billion, most modern carriers, such as those fielded by Britain or France, cost around $5 billion.

But they are vital to project power across the globe, enabling a country to launch air strikes against almost any target without having to use local air bases.

Russia is committing hundreds of billions of dollars to rearmament this decade, and the navy is pursuing a sweeping shipbuilding program through 2050. The revamp aims to restore the military might that Moscow lost with the fall of the Soviet Union, when large portions of the navy rusted away in port due to lack of funds to maintain and operate the vessels.

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