The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Admiral Declares Comeback of Russia's Black Sea Fleet

By The Moscow Times

July 26, 2015



Russian warships are seen during a rehearsal for the Navy Day parade in Sevastopol, Crimea, July 24, 2015.

The head of Russia's Black Sea Fleet on Sunday declared the end of a period of post-Soviet naval decay, saying that the fleet had received over 10 new warships last year and was set to receive a wide array of aircraft, submarines and surface vessels in the near future.

"For the first time in a long time we have inducted more than 10 new combat ships and support vessels into the fleet in the course of one calendar year," Admiral Alexander Vitko said, news agency RIA Novosti reported Sunday.

The Black Sea Fleet, headquartered at Sevastopol in Crimea, was severely limited by a basing agreement with Ukraine before Russia annexed the territory in March 2014. Under the agreement, Russia was unable to add new ships to the aging Soviet-built fleet.

The Defense Ministry began reinforcing the fleet with new vessels following the annexation last year and has added a handful of new submarines and small warships to its ranks.

The navy is one of the main beneficiaries of an ambitious 20 trillion ruble ($350 billion) rearmament program set to wrap up in 2020. The injection of funds aims to restore Russia's ability to project force beyond its own waters.

This year the navy is expected to commission over 10 new warships, 40 support ships and an unspecified number of naval aircraft and coastal defense forces into its ranks, the head of the navy, Admiral Viktor Chirkov, was quoted by news agency TASS as saying Sunday.

The navy is also increasing its operational tempo, spending more time at sea than at any point since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

According to Chirkov, on June 30 the Russian navy had 100 warships and submarines deployed simultaneously, though as of Sunday only 68 were at sea.

Russia is now also maintaining a permanent deployment of up to 10 vessels in the Mediterranean at any given time, and has begun patrolling the Gulf of Aden, Chirkov said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/07/26/russian-admiral-declares-comeback-of-russias-black-sea-fleet-a48523