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Russia Names Putin's New 'Super Weapons' After a Quirky Public Vote

By Reuters

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Russian Ministry of Defense

Russia has unveiled the names for a new generation of nuclear-powered missiles touted by President Vladimir Putin as invincible after more than seven million people took part in a quirky public vote organized by the Russian military.

The names chosen include "Peresvet," after a medieval warrior monk, for a laser and "Burevestnik," after a seabird, for a cruise missile.

The arms systems, which Putin revealed in a bellicose state-of-the-nation speech this month, include a nuclear-powered cruise missile, an underwater nuclear-powered drone, and a laser weapon.

Putin has often used militaristic rhetoric to mobilize support and buttress his narrative that Russia is under siege from the West, and some critics complain that public discourse

increasingly resembles that of a country at war.

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The culmination of the "name that weapon" vote comes amid fears in both Russia and the West about a new arms race, something Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump have said they don't want, and after Putin won a landslide re-election victory.

Russia's Ministry of Defense asked the public to name the weapons systems in an online vote, something it has never done before, and unveiled the results late on Thursday on state TV.

After the results were announced, Deputy Defense Minister Yuri Borisov explained on state TV, to ripples of applause, what the new weapons were capable of.

Warrior monk, Greek god and seabird

The Defense Ministry said Russians had voted to name the new military laser "Peresvet" after a medieval warrior monk, Alexander Peresvet, who took part in a 14th century battle against the Mongols. Peresvet is revered by some clerics in the Russian Orthodox Church, whose influence has grown under Putin.

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The winning name for the underwater nuclear drone was more conventional ☒ "Poseidon" after the Greek god of the sea, drawing criticism from some Russians who complained the name was too foreign.

The new nuclear-powered cruise missile, which Putin has boasted could hit almost any point in the world and evade a U.S.-built missile shield. This missile will be called "Burevestnik," Russian for the Storm Petrel bird, the Defense Ministry said.

The Storm Petrel is a seabird whose presence mariners believe foretells bad weather.

Putin's boasts about the new weapons have been greeted with scepticism in Washington, where officials have cast doubt on whether Russia has added any new capabilities to its nuclear arsenal beyond those already known to the U.S. military and intelligence agencies.

Among the suggested names for the weapons systems that did not make the final cut: "Stalin," after the Soviet dictator, and "Palmyra," after the Syrian city which Russian forces helped Syrian President Bashar al-Assad take back from Islamic State.

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