



საქართველოს სტრატეგიისა და საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობების კვლევის ფონდი
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The structure of the Russian armed forces keeps changing as Moscow strives to increase its military potential. Russian Military Transformation Tracker has been reporting these structural changes in the Russian military since August 2018. You can see all issues of the Tracker at [this page](#). For a comprehensive geographic view of the Russian military structure see our [Interactive Map of the Russian Military Forces](#). You can also follow a wider spectrum of key events concerning the Russian armed forces through weekly issues of [Rondeli Russian Military Digest](#).

In the period from December 2020 to June 2021, Russians continued to increase their land forces in Europe, in particular in Moscow's strategic outposts of Kaliningrad Oblast and occupied Crimea, Ukraine.

A new mechanized division was being formed in Kaliningrad Oblast, considerably strengthening Russian military power in that exclave. It was announced that a mechanized brigade in Volgograd Oblast would be expanded into a mechanized division. Meanwhile, an air assault brigade was being transferred from Volgograd Oblast to occupied Crimea.

Russians also continued developing their forces in the Arctic, where the Northern Fleet command was equated in status with a military district. They launched formation of a coastal defense division in Chukotka, and established permanent rotational fighter aircraft presence at the Amderma-2 (Rogachevo) air base, on the Novaya Zemlya archipelago.

In parallel with extending its military aircraft presence to the north, Moscow also did it in the Middle East, developing its Khmeimim air base to the extent that it became capable of hosting strategic bombers. Meanwhile, Russia's recent success in acquiring a naval station at Port Sudan turned somewhat tenuous as the Sudanese side said it wished to review conditions of the deal that had allowed Russian naval presence at the Port Sudan base.

Russian navy received three new corvettes – two joined the Pacific Fleet and one the Black Sea Fleet – and a nuclear-powered submarine joining the Northern Fleet. Two older corvettes were decommissioned from the Black Sea Fleet in 2020.

Overseas*

Russians kept up their work to upgrade the **Khmeimim air base** in Syria, [extending](#) a runway for it to accommodate larger aircraft. By late May 2021, they were able to [deploy](#) three Tu-22M3 long-range strategic bombers to the Khmeimim air base for a few days.

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* This section does not include unofficial Russian deployments conducted by the Wagner group or similar forces in Libya, Venezuela, the Central African Republic and other countries.

In early June 2021, the Sudanese side made a statement to the effect that it [wished to review](#) the agreement with Moscow granting the Russian navy a **naval station at Port Sudan**. The future of Russian naval presence at Port Sudan remained unclear at the time of writing.

The Ukrainian Frontier

In April 2021, Russian sources [revealed](#) plans to establish a new **20th Mechanized Division** on the basis of the 20th Mechanized Brigade (Volgograd) of the 8th Army (HQ in Novochoerkassk, Rostov Oblast). The new division's units reportedly will be stationed in Volgograd and Kamyshin (Volgograd Oblast).

*

On 25 March 2021, Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoygu [announced](#) the relocation, planned for 2021, of the **56th Air Assault Brigade** (Kamyshin, Volgograd Oblast) of the Russian Airborne Troops (VDV) to Feodosia in occupied Crimea, Ukraine, and the brigade's transformation into the **56th Air Assault Regiment**.

*

A new **Special Mobile Company** was [established](#) by March 2021 within the **1st Army Corps** (Donetsk) of the Russian hybrid forces in the Russian-occupied part of Donbas, Ukraine.

*

A new **anti-aircraft missile brigade** [reportedly](#) was in the process of being established in the Southern Military District as of January 2021, set to be armed with Buk-M3 and Buk-M2 air defense missile systems. The brigade will become a part of one of the three land armies in the district.

*

A new *Buyan-M / Project 21631* class missile corvette **Grayvoron** [joined](#) the Black Sea Fleet on 30 January 2021. It serves at the Sevastopol naval base in occupied Crimea, Ukraine.

*

Two *Nanuchka III / Project 12341 Ovod-1* class corvettes of the Black Sea Fleet, *Mirazh* and *Shtil*, were [decommissioned](#) from the Russian navy in 2020.

The Caucasus

A new **NBC Protection Regiment** was [established](#) within the 49th Army (HQ in Stavropol) by May 2021. The regiment reportedly includes "flamethrower units." Normally Russian NBC protection regiments include a flamethrower battalion that has, among other equipment, three thermobaric multiple rocket launchers.

*

One of the anti-aircraft missile regiments in [Krasnodar Krai](#) began [rearmament](#) with new **S-350** surface-to-air missile systems in May 2021. It is possible that the regiment in question is the **1721st Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment** (Sochi, Krasnodar Krai) of the 51st Air Defense Division (HQ in Rostov-on-Don), the 4th Air and Air Defense Forces Army (HQ in Rostov-on-Don) armed with Buk-M1 medium-range surface-to-air missile systems.

The Baltic Region

A new **18th Mechanized Division** was established in Kaliningrad Oblast on 1 December 2020, with information regarding this [appearing](#) in Russian sources in January 2021. It [belongs](#) to the Baltic Fleet's 11th Army Corps. Main [units](#) of the 18th Division are: the newly established **275th Mechanized Regiment** and **280th Mechanized Regiment**, the **79th Mechanized Regiment** and the [20th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion](#) (which includes a new **deep reconnaissance company**) established on the basis of the former 79th Mechanized Brigade, as well as the 11th Tank Regiment (Gusev) and the [22nd](#) Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment (Kaliningrad) that had been in existence (the 11th Tank Regiment – since late 2018) and were included in the new 18th Division.

Some [reports](#) and other open sources information suggested regarding these new units' geographic distribution that the 275th and 280th Mechanized Regiments were to be located in Gusev while the 79th Mechanized Regiment and the 20th Separate Reconnaissance Battalion were stationed in Sovetsk (former Tilsit), but that was not yet known for certain as of June 2021.

While the 7th Mechanized Regiment (Kaliningrad) reportedly will not become a part of the 18th Division, it remained unclear at the time of writing whether the 244th Artillery Brigade (Kaliningrad) would be included.

*

A **UAV company** armed with Eleron-3 and Orlan-10 drones was [created](#) in early 2021 within the 336th Naval Infantry Brigade (Baltiysk, Kaliningrad Oblast) of the Baltic Fleet.

*

A **mobile air defense regiment** armed with Pantsir-S air defense systems was [established](#) in Leningrad Oblast within the 6th Air and Air Defense Forces Army (HQ in Saint Petersburg) in late 2020.

The Arctic

On 1 January 2021, Vladimir Putin's decree rendering the status of the **Northern Fleet** command equal to that of a Russian military district [went into force](#). The command includes Arkhangelsk and Murmansk

Oblasts, Komi Republic, and Nenets Autonomous Okrug – territories formerly belonging to the Western Military District.

*

Russians [launched](#) the formation of a **coastal defense division** in Chukotka Autonomous Okrug, establishing its first **coastal defense regiment** in late 2020. The regiment's exact location was unknown at the time of writing.

*

Russians established permanent rotational presence of **fighter aircraft at the Amderma-2 (Rogachevo) air base**, on the Novaya Zemlya archipelago. MiG-31BM interceptors of the 98th Separate Mixed Aviation Regiment (Monchegorsk air base, Murmansk Oblast) were [stationed](#) at Rogachevo in January 2021. In March 2021, they were [relieved](#) by MiG-29KR fighters of the 100th Separate Shipborne Fighter Regiment (Severomorsk-3 air base, Murmansk Oblast)

*

Project 885M Yasen-M class nuclear-powered submarine **Kazan** [joined](#) the Northern Fleet on 7 May 2021. [It will serve](#) at the Murmansk-150 (Zaozersk) naval base. *Project 02510 BK-16* class high-speed landing craft **D-321** [joined](#) the Northern Fleet on 1 June 2021.

The Far East

A **tank regiment** was [established](#) on 1 December 2020 within the 127th Mechanized Division (Sergeyevka, Primorsky Krai) of the 5th Army (Ussuriysk, Primorsky Krai), on the basis of the 84th Separate Tank Battalion (Sergeyevka).

*

A **battalion of S-400** surface-to-air missile systems was [established](#) within the 1724th Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Sakhalin Oblast) in February 2021.

*

A **coastal missile brigade** that was set to be armed with Bastion-P and Bal mobile coastal defense missile systems was [established](#) on the island of Sakhalin in December 2020.

*

Steregushchiy / *Project 20380* class corvette **Aldar Tsydenzhapov** [joined](#) the Pacific Fleet on 25 December 2020, and was [stationed](#) at the Vladivostok naval base. On 29 December 2020, *Gremyashchiy* / *Project 20385* class corvette **Gremyashchiy** [joined](#) the Russian navy and was set to be [transferred](#) to the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky naval base. *Alexandrit* / *Project 12700* class minesweeper **Yakov**

Balyaev joined the Pacific Fleet on 26 December 2020 and was also stationed at the [Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky](#) naval base.

Naval Infantry

As reported by Russian sources in May 2021, **anti-UAV detachments** armed with electronic warfare equipment and sniper rifles had been [created](#) within the Russian Naval Infantry units.