



### The Crimea: Europe's Next Flashpoint?

This occasional report by Taras Kuzio examines Russian-Ukraine relations and the future of the Crimea as well as the port of Sevastopol, a key strategic naval base for the Russian navy.



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This occasional report addresses the historical shift in the global natural gas industry away from overland pipeline deliveries and toward liquefied natural gas, as well as Russia's move toward becoming a leader in the emerging LNG market.

# Russian Military Considers the United States its Main Enemy in the Far East

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Moscow has been hoping that the earthquake and tsunami disaster that hit Japan on March 11, may help overcome the acute crisis in its relations with Tokyo over the South Kurile Islands. President Dmitry Medvedev promptly telephoned Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan to express his condolences and offered support. Russian emergency workers were sent to help earthquake survivors and to offer advice in dealing with the Fukushima nuclear power reactor disaster. Moscow agreed to increase shipments of oil and liquefied natural gas to help Japan overcome energy shortages caused by nuclear power shutdowns. Russian diplomats expressed hope that the outpouring of sympathy by the Russian public may help improve relations and lessen tensions (Kommersant, March 14).

Moscow needs Japanese capital and technology to develop its Far East and is keen to improve relations while sidelining the territorial dispute over the Kuriles. Sources in the General Staff have been quoted as saying that Russia plans to deploy its newest weapons to the Kuriles: the S-400 anti-aircraft missiles, Bastion-P mobile coastal anti-ship cruise missile systems, Tor-M2 short-range anti-aircraft missiles and Mi-28N attack helicopters (Interfax, March 1). The report seems to be largely exaggerated, since such a deployment does not make much strategic sense and the Russian military does not physically have these weapons for deployment in the Kuriles.

Russia today has only four S-400 systems or "divisions," each having eight mobile launchers with four rocket tubes, radars and command centers. The S-400 "division" is the smallest deployable tactical unit of the anti-aircraft system. Only two S-400 "divisions" are at present operational, forming one anti-aircraft missile regiment. The second two-divisional regiment is in the process of being formed. Both S-400 regiments will be deployed near Moscow. By 2020 Moscow hopes to have 28 S-400 regiments or 56 "divisions" (VPK, March 2).

Russia at present has some 15 partially operational Mi-28N helicopters – the Russian equivalent of the US Apache Longbow (Vedomosti, March 10). All of the Mi-28N's are deployed in the North Caucasus, where there is a distinct possibility of renewed large-scale armed conflict with local insurgents, with Georgia or an intervention into a possible Armenian-Azeri conflict over Karabakh. Last month a Mi-28N crashed during a training flight because of engine failure, killing a decorated helicopter pilot, a veteran of wars with Georgia and in the North Caucasus Lieutenant-Colonel Andrei Glyantsev (RIA Novosti, February 15). Since then all Mi-28N have been grounded.

Russia currently has some 120 Tor anti-aircraft complexes, but these are predominantly Tor-M1, produced in the 1980's and early 1990's. There is only handful of the newer Tor-M2 version (RIA Novosti, August 8, 2010). Russia has only three deployed Bastion-P complexes armed with the long-range supersonic cruise missile Yakhont. Each complex has four mobile launchers with two missiles each together with command and control centers. Last January these three Bastion-P batteries were fully deployed on the North Caucasus coast of the Black Sea, forming the 11th separate rocket/artillery brigade of the Black Sea Fleet (RIA Novosti, January 18). One Bastion-P complex has been delivered to Vietnam. Syria has a contract to receive Bastion-P, but the delivery, apparently, has not yet been completed (Kommersant, February 24). Sources connected to the Russian arms export industry have told Jamestown, the postponement of the delivery of Bastion-P to Syria is the result of a decision made in 2008 after the war with Georgia and the deployment of NATO and US warships in the Black Sea for exercises and delivery of humanitarian aid to Batumi. Medvedev and Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, traditionally spend much time in Sochi on the Black Sea coast and were apparently disturbed by the Western naval presence, so the Bastion-P was diverted from Syria to arm the 11th brigade to deter Western navies in case there is another armed conflict in the region. It took years to build and deploy the 11th brigade, so the Kuriles will hardly receive anything anytime soon, if ever.

The S-400 and the Bastion-P need roads to be land-mobile to avoid attack. On the Kuriles there is little space and practically no traffic or roads. The S-400 and Bastion-P would be sitting ducks very close to Japanese territory and easy to

destroy.

Russia's top general told Jamestown on condition of anonymity, the General Staff does not plan to deploy either the S-300 or S-400 in the Kuriles: "As military professionals we are preparing to face any eventuality, but do not consider a full-scale amphibious assault to regain the territory a serious threat." Instead, a landing of unarmed Japanese civilian protesters that may set up a tent camp on some South Kurile beach to organize a sit-in to demand the return of the disputed lands is considered possible and the Russian garrison is preparing for this. Teargas and water cannon may be deployed to the South Kuriles.

There are indeed plans to send S-400 to the Pacific region, but not the Kuriles – to Kamchatka. Under direct orders from Putin, a new model base has been built in Kamchatka, in Velyuchensk and Rybachy close to the regional capital Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski to house Russia's newest strategic nuclear submarines of the Borei class with the Bulava SS-NX-30 ballistic missile. The deployment of the Borei nuclear submarines makes Petropavlovsk as important a strategic point as Moscow, St. Petersburg and the Kola Peninsula, which warrants the early deployment of the S-400 system to defend against a possible US air and cruise attack. The South Kuriles are in fact part of the peripheral defense of the nuclear submarine force in Kamchatka – long-range radar, sonar and other electronic intelligence-gathering equipment will be deployed to monitor US/Japanese air and naval activities.

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski is beyond the reach of China's air force and navy. Last October the commander of the Pacific Fleet, Admiral Konstantin Sidenko, was appointed commander of the Eastern Military District also known as Joint Strategic Command "East." Russia's territory has been divided into Joint Strategic Commands East, West, South and Center that unite air, sea and land forces, but only "East" has a naval officer in charge – the first to command a military district in Russia's history. This is direct material evidence the main threat in the region is seen coming from the sea, from the US, as during the Cold War and not from the Chinese landmass.

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