

Bid for naval dominance: Russia significantly boosts nuclear fleet

By [Aleksey Nikolskyi](#)

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Russia's navy will be reinforced with 51 modern warships and 24 submarines, including eight fitted to carry nuclear missiles, by 2020. Over \$140 billion will be spent on realizing the "potential of the sea-based nuclear force," Vladimir Putin said.

To maintain Russia's place as a leading sea power Russia will allocate over 4.5 trillion rubles to build the vessels over the next eight years. Putin has emphasized that almost all orders will go to Russian industry, with all 24 submarines and 49 of the ships being built at domestic shipyards.

"We have a sufficient potential of a sea-based nuclear force," Putin said. "And by 2020, it will be considerably improved by eight Borei-class new-generation missile-carrying submarines."

Russia's navy has always been and remains one of the main tools of "protecting national economic interests," Putin said, adding that it has a particular importance in such resource-rich regions as the Arctic. He expressed the hope that missile-equipped nuclear submarines will become the heart and cornerstone of the Russian Navy. The main development task for the navy would be the formation of "multi-purpose naval groups," which should be capable of repelling military threats from the sea, safeguarding transport communications, protecting the merchant marine and effectively resisting piracy. Putin's comments came after he oversaw the start of the construction of one of Russia's latest generation Borei-class submarines.

The president noted that it was symbolic that the latest submarine was called after the unifier and defender of Russian lands, Prince Vladimir.

The Prince Vladimir submarine, which belongs to the fourth generation of nuclear strategic missile-carriers, will be built under the modernized Borei A project. It will carry 20 Bulava inter-continental ballistic missiles as compared to 16 carried by the submarines built during the earlier project. The first Borei-class sub, Yuri Dolgoruky, laid down in 1996, is currently completing its final tests, and will soon be handed over to the navy. Meanwhile, the Sevmash plant is building two other submarines, which were laid down in 2004 and 2006.

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