

“Defend Russia’s Interests”: Russian Navy’s Permanent Mediterranean Task Force to Include Nuclear Subs

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Russia’s Mediterranean task force will comprise 5-6 warships and may be enlarged to include nuclear submarines, Navy Commander Adm. Viktor Chirkov said on Sunday.

“Overall, already from this year, we plan to have 5-6 warships and support vessels [in the Mediterranean Sea], which will be replaced on a rotating basis from each of the fleets – the [Black Sea](#), Baltic, [Northern](#) and, in some cases, even the [Pacific Fleet](#). Depending on the scope of assignments and their complexity, the number of warships in the task force may be increased,” Chirkov told RIA Novosti.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu earlier [said a decision to deploy a permanent task force in the Mediterranean](#) to defend Russia’s interests in the area had been made.



[The Russian navy](#) commander also said nuclear submarines could be deployed in the Mediterranean, if necessary.

“Possibly. In a perspective. They [submarines] were present there during the existence of the 5th squadron. There were both [nuclear and diesel submarines](#) there. Everything will depend on the situation,” he said.

The Soviet Union maintained its 5th Mediterranean Squadron in that sea from 1967 until 1992. It was formed to counter the US Navy 6th Fleet during the Cold War, and consisted of 30-50 warships and auxiliary vessels at different times.

Russia also plans to use its Mediterranean task force for missions in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the country’s Navy chief said.

“No doubt, if necessary, when some tasks arise in other nearby regions, in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the task force may be used,” Chirkov said.



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History of the Russian submarine fleet

Now the Russian Navy is training officers who will perform their duties at sea on a permanent basis, he said.

“These persons must be comprehensively trained to solve tasks not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans,” he said.

The headquarters of Russia’s Mediterranean taskforce will be set up already in the summer of 2013, he said.

“The headquarters will be established in the summer of this year and its officers will stay aboard one of the flagships in the Mediterranean Sea,” he said.

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