

Russia announces the reinforcement of the Black Sea Fleet

On 24 June, Russian Defence Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov and Russian Navy Commander Vladimir Vysotsky confirmed the existence of plans to reinforce the Black Sea Fleet by adding new combat units and by modernising those already in operation. These announcements are a consequence of the agreement extending the lease of the Russian Black Sea Fleet Base in Ukrainian territory until 2042, signed this April, which enables Russia to develop its military potential in the Black Sea basin in an unrestricted manner.

Soon after the agreement extending the lease of Black Sea Fleet Base was signed, representatives of the Russian navy (including Vice Admiral Oleg Burtsev, First Deputy Chief of the Naval General Staff) disclosed plans for the development of the Fleet. According to initial plans, it will receive two new corvettes and three submarines. It is also envisaged that the Sevastopol port will be used as a base for Russian ships on combat mission in the Indian Ocean. The Russian National Armament Plan for 2010–2020 which is to be adopted by the end of this year provides that the Black Sea Fleet will receive 15 new combat vessels of various types. It cannot be ruled out that the Black Sea Fleet will also be temporarily reinforced with vessels from the Baltic and the Far East Fleets. Furthermore, Moscow is using the Black Sea Fleet as a factor contributing to the preservation of the Russian presence in Crimea. This is manifested by supporting ethnic Russian residents in Crimea and implementing economic initiatives financed by the Russian state budget. The presence of the fleet also guarantees maintaining between 90,000 and 100,000 jobs in and near Sevastopol. <peż>