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Russia Lays Down 3 New Nuclear Submarines

Russia has begun construction of three new subs including its latest ballistic missile nuclear submarine.

By Franz-Stefan Gady
October 07, 2016

Three new submarines were officially laid down at the Sevmash shipyard in Severodvinsk, a port city on Russia's White Sea a few weeks ago, according to Russian media reports. Laying down formally kicks off a ship's construction with a ceremony.

The three submarines include the second improved variant of the *Borei*-class of nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), the Project 955A *Borei II Knyaz Oleg* slated to join Russia's Pacific Fleet in 2018-19; a new *Yasen*-class multi-purpose attack nuclear submarine (SSGN), the *Krasnoyarsk* with an unknown completion date, and a mysterious new sub known as *Khabarovsk* also identified as Project 0951.

“[U]nder the state arms program endorsed by you and in compliance with the schedule set by the Russian Ministry of Defense, Sevmash laid down three new atomic submarines – the *Knyaz Oleg*, which is the fifth *Borei*, the *Khabarovsk* and one more *Yasen*, the modernized project 885M,” the director general of Sevmash, Mikhail Budnichenko said during a videoconference session with Russian President Vladimir Putin in late July, TASS news agency reports.

The most intriguing and least known about sub is the mysterious Project 0951 *Khabarovsk*. As I noted elsewhere (See: “Revealed: Russia's Top Secret Nuclear Torpedo”), one of the first times

that plans for the construction of the *Khabarovsk* were revealed occurred in November 2015, when Russian state-run television station accidentally aired top secret plans of a new long-range nuclear torpedo called Status-6. (Some sources indicate that the leak was intentional.)

According to a slide filmed by the television crew, “oceanic multi-purpose Status-6 system” is designed to “destroy important economic installations of the enemy in coastal areas and cause guaranteed devastating damage to the country’s territory by creating wide areas of radioactive contamination, rendering them unusable for military, economic or other activity for a long time.”

I explained:

With a diameter of 1 meter, the “robotic mini-submarine” (or torpedo) would apparently be launched by either a Project 09852 sub – based on the 949A Oscar-class boat—or a Project 09851 submarine, laid down in December 2012 and July 2014 respectively and with unknown completion dates.

Once completed, both submarines will have the capability to carry smaller unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV): The Project 09852 sub will be able to carry up to six torpedoes, whereas a Project 09851 boat will be capable of fitting up to four UUVs.

There have also been Russian media reports that a Project 09851 boat was laid down in 2014. Another Russian source, also referring to a Project 09851 laid down in the middle of 2014, claims that the new sub will likely be commissioned by 2020. It is unclear whether all these reports speak of the same submarine, or whether more than one Project 09851 sub was laid down in the last two years.