Development of Russian Armed Forces in the Vicinity of Japan

July 2022

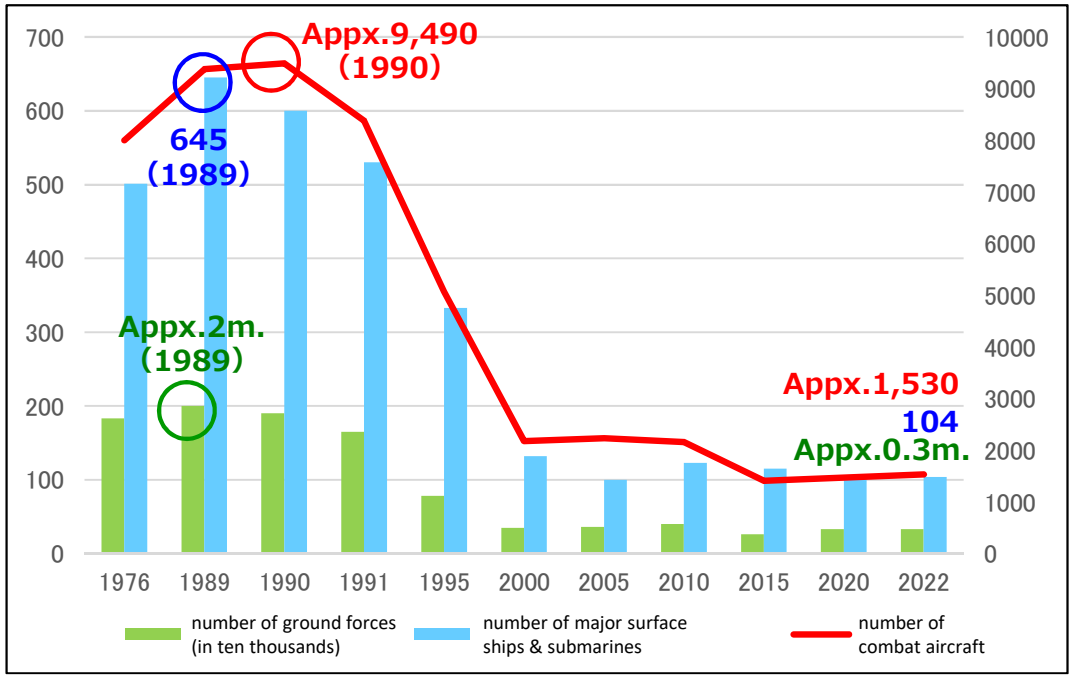
Japan Ministry of Defense

Transition of Russian Armed Forces in General

(Source: : Japanese MOD "Defense of Japan", Military Balance, Russian Federal Treasury's Information on Execution of Budgets of the Russian Federation, etc.)

- Armed Forces of Russian Federation (AFRF) significantly decreased since the fall of the Soviet Union (the number fell to roughly 20 percent compared to its peak in the former Soviet era)
  ⇒ Promotes military downsizing such as by shifting from division-based to brigade-based command structure
- Against the backdrop of rising international oil prices, stagnant Russian economy started to grow since around year 2000 and defense expenditures increased
  ⇒ Promotes modernization of equipment (the goal of increasing the ratio of new equipment to 70 % by the end of 2020 has been achieved)

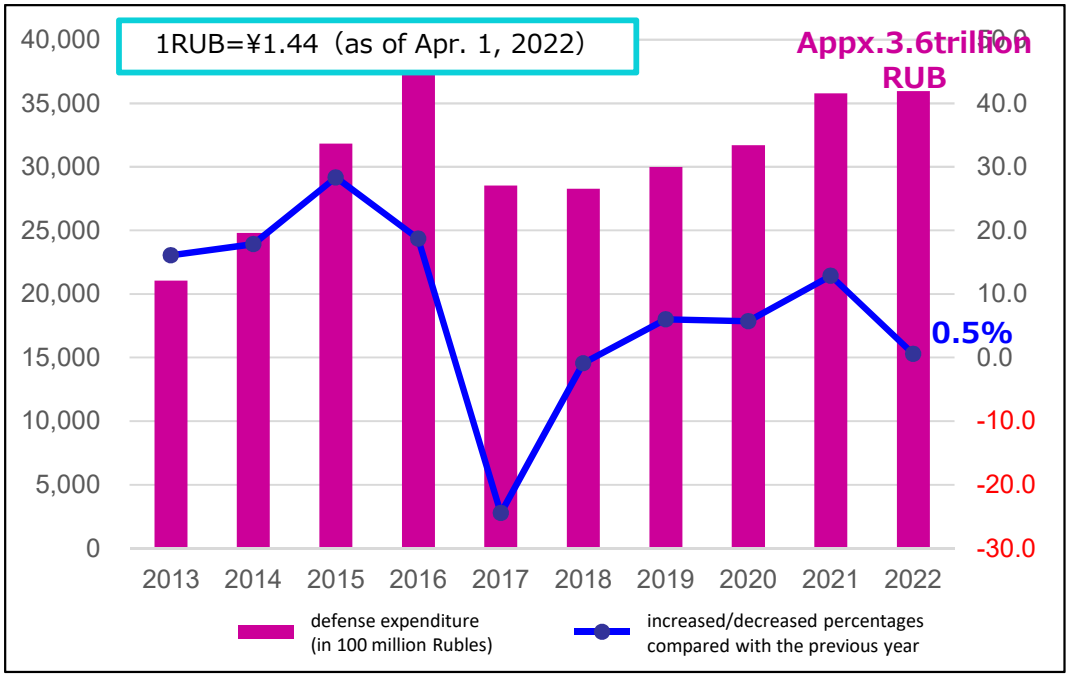
Armed Forces



* 1976：Announcement of Japan's Basic Defense Program 1976, 1989： Armed Forces at its peak (as for no. of combat aircraft, 1990 was its peak), 1990： Start of Soviet armed forces' reduction(as for no. of combat aircraft, 1991 was the start), 1995： Announcement of Japan's Basic Defense Program 1995

** "number of major surface ships & submarines" means the number of combatant ships with a displacement of frigates or above; "number of combat aircraft" means the number of military aircraft other than transport, refuel, etc.

Defense Expenditure



*** Figures are executed amounts of the year, except for the amount of FY 2021.

**** From 2011 to 2016, defense expenditure continued to grow by double digits year-on-year, and its ratio to GDP peaked at4.4% in FY 2016.

Transition of AFRF in the Far East

（Source: Japanese MOD “Defense of Japan”, etc.）

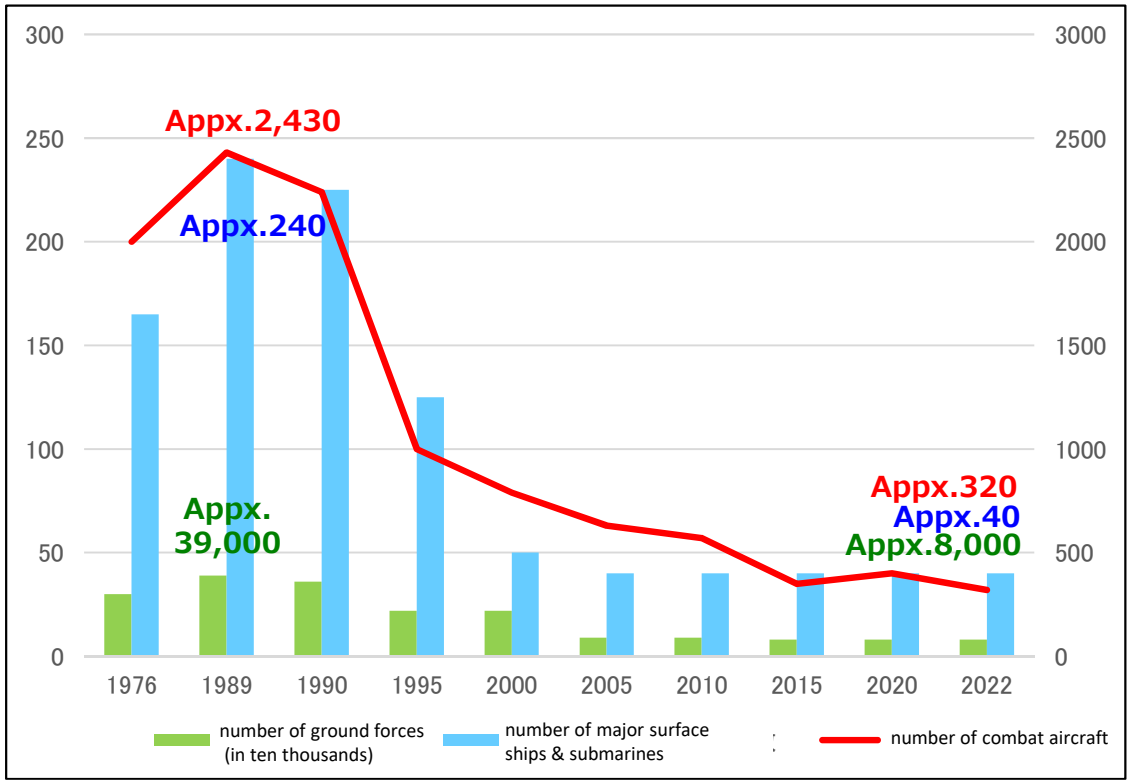
- Although AFRF in the Far East is significantly smaller than when it was at its peak, Russia maintains a considerable size of military forces including nuclear capabilities.
- New equipment, such as fighters, surface-to-surface missile systems, long-range surface-to-air missiles are also deployed in the Far East as well as in the European region.
- First vessels carrying “Kalibr” cruise missiles, which are regarded as a component of Russia’s non-nuclear strategic deterrence are deployed in the Far East in 2021.

* “Kalibr” is a ship-launched long-range cruise missile (SS-N-30 (anti-ship version) has a range of 1,500km (surface ship type) or 2,000km.(submarine type) while SS-N-27(land attack version) has a range of 660km. The missile has been used by Russian Naval attack during military operations in Syria. It is said to be capable of both conventional and nuclear warheads.

Armed Forces

(number of ground forces in ten thousands)
(number of major surface ships & submarines as indicated)

（number of combat aircraft）



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Examples of AFRF in the Far East

Borey-class SSBN
New SSBN deployed in the Far East since 2015. Plans to deploy a total of four, and two had already entered service

Steregushchiy-class frigate
New frigate deployed in the Far East since 2017. Russian Pacific Fleet has three Type 20381 and one Type 20385 as of December 2021. The latter is improved version equipped with “Kalibr” cruise missile

Surface-to-surface missile system “Iskander”
New missile deployed in the Far East since 2013

SAM “S-400”
New SAM deployed in the Far East since 2012

Su-35 fighter
New fighter deployed in the Far East since 2014

Su-34 fighter-bomber
New fighter-bomber deployed in the Far East since 2016

Development of AFRF in the Far East & Northern Territories (NT)

（Source: Japanese MOD “Defense of Japan”, JSO announcements, Russian MOD announcements, media reports, etc.）

- AFRF tend to increase military activities including reinforcement of armament in the Pacific & Arctic Ocean coast and joint operations with PLA
- AFRF deploy a considerable scale of military forces including nuclear forces and replace equipment in the region such as in European Russia

AFRF’s Exercise & Training

- Large scale exercise “Vostok 2018” was conducted in Sept 2018 (as announced by Russian MOD)
  - 297 thousand troops, 1,000 aircraft, 80 vessels, 36 thousand tanks and other equipment (largest exercise since the Cold War)
  - Chinese and Mongolian armed forces participated for the first time.
- AFRF participated First joint operational-strategic exercise with PLA in PRC in Aug 2021

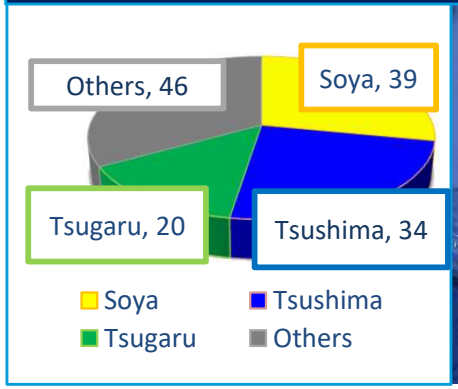
Russian Aircraft Activities

- Average number of JASDF aircraft scrambled against Russian aircraft per year is approximately 305 times over the past five years.
- Russian Strategic bombers and other aircraft circled around Japanese archipelago about once or twice per year over the past five years .
- AFRF and PLA bombers conduct annual joint flight from the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean since 2019

Russian Naval vessel Activities

- In Sep 2018, 28 ships passed the Soya strait marking the highest number since the end of the Cold War.
- In Oct 2021, AFRF and PLA vessels conducted first joint navigation along the Pacific coast of Japan via Tsugaru and Ōsumi straits
- In Feb 2022, 24 ships, supposedly participated to fleet exercise in the Sea of Japan and the south region of the Sea of Okhotsk, were observed by JSDF

Russian naval vessels which passed through the Straits (announced for FY2021)



AFRF’s Deployment & Equipment

- Surface-to-ship missiles have been deployed in Etorofu and Kunashiri is. in 2016 and in Matsuwa and Karafuto(Sakhalin) is. in 2021. Russian newspaper reported that Russian MOD plans further deployment of SSM in Paramushiru is.
- Long-range surface-to-air missiles have been deployed in Etorofu and Kunashiri is. in 2020 and in Karafuto in 2021.
- Russian Pacific Fleet received first 4 Kalibr cruise missile-equipped vessels in 2021.

AFRF enhances its capabilities in the Arctic Region (Sopka-2 Radar in Wrangel Is.)

AFRF Unit in the Northern Territories (NT)

(Source: Japanese MOD "Defense of Japan", Russian MOD announcements, IHS Jane's, media reports, etc.)

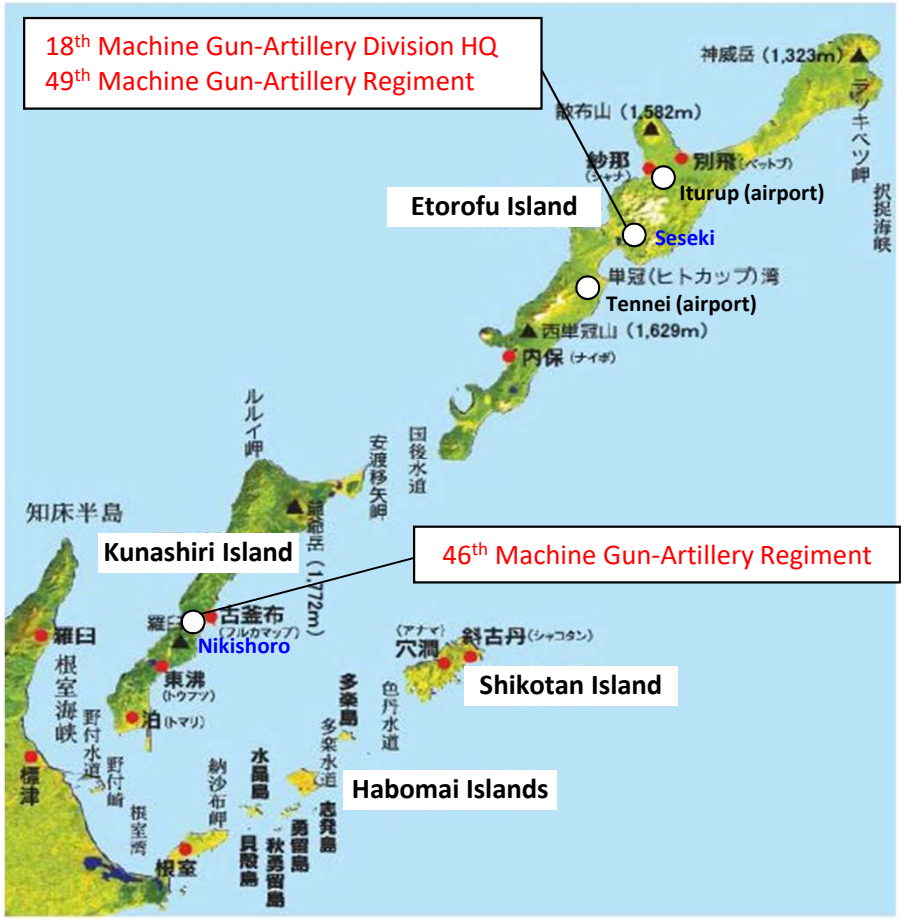
Stationed Unit

- Units of 18th Machine Gun-Artillery Division are stationed at Etorofu and Kunashiri islands (the number of deployed troops is appx. 3,500) to defend against landing forces.

Renewal of Equipment & Facility Development

- Tanks, self-propelled artillery, MLRS, SAM, helicopters, etc. are deployed at the NT.
- In Feb 2011, the then president Medvedev instructed the then Defense Minister Serdyukov to take necessary steps to modernize the equipment in the "Kuril" islands*.
- In Mar 2011, Russian General Staff allegedly developed a detailed plan to renew equipment of forces stationed at the "Kuril" islands.
- In Mar 2016, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it plans to deploy surface-to-ship missiles (SSMs) "Bastion"(SSC-5) and "Bal"(SSC-6) in the "Kuril" islands by the end of the year
- It was reported that Etorofu island's new civilian airport became dual use with the military in Jan 2018 and that three fighters (Su-35S) were deployed at the airport in August of the same year.
- In Dec 2020, media related to the Russian Ministry of Defense has reported the deployment of SAM "S-300V4" to Etorofu and Kunashiri islands.

* "Kuril" is a Russian geographical name which refers to Northern Territories and Chishima islands .



Main equipment of AFRF in Etorofu and Kunashiri Islands


MLRS Smerch


New type Tank "T-72B 3"


SAM "S-300V4"


SSM "Bastion"


Multirole fighter "Su-35"


Multirole Helicopter "Mi-8"


Inspection UAV "Orlan-10"


SSM "Bal"

18th Machinegun & Artillery Div. within the AFRF

- Eastern Joint Strategic Command (Khabarovsk)
  - (Navy, Air Force)
  - 5th Army (Ussuriysk)
  - 29th Army (Chita)
  - 35th Army (Belogorsk)
  - 36th Army (Ulan-Ude)
  - 68th Army Corps (Toyohara/Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk)
    - 39th Motorized Brig. (Southern Karafuto/Sakhalin)
    - 18th Machinegun & Artillery Div. (Etorofu&Kunashiri islands)

Military significance of Northern Territories (NT) and Chishima Islands from Russian viewpoint

(Source: The National Interest, Russian media, Soviet Military Power 1989,Google Map, etc.)

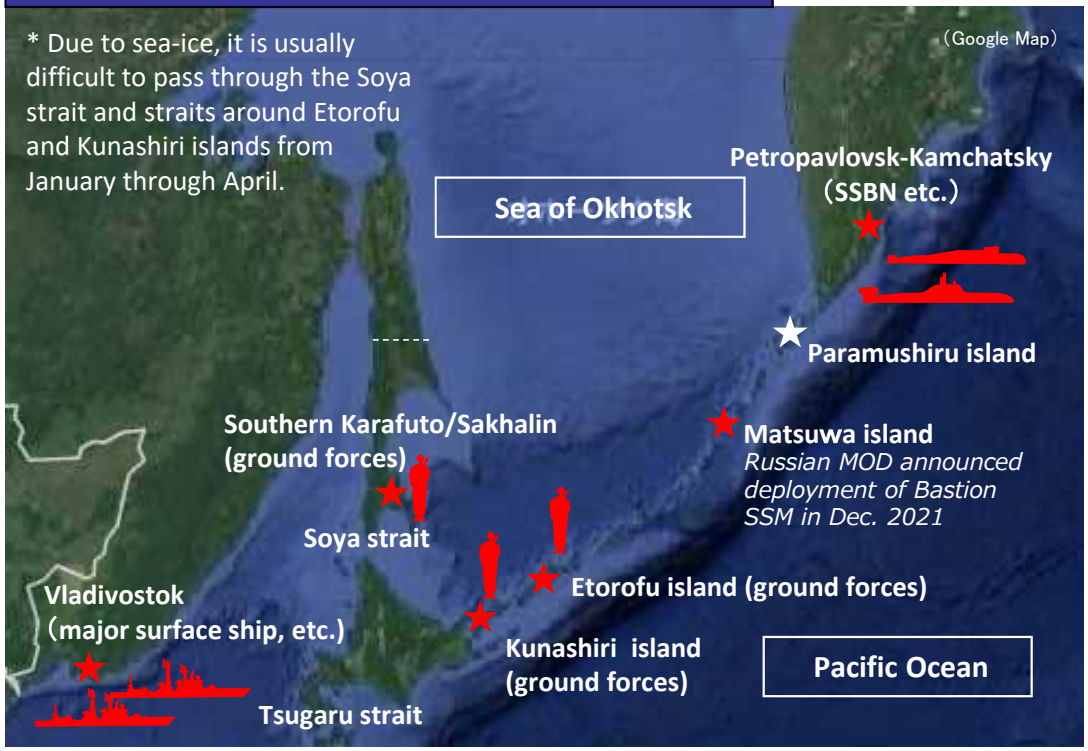
Comments from diplomatic magazines and media

- The "Kuril" islands [*i.e.* NT and Chishima Islands] are important for major surface ships deployed at Vladivostok to maintain unfettered access to the Pacific.
- As its missile range became longer, the former Soviet Union developed so-called "Bastion(fortress) Strategy" that allowed them to easily defend their SSBNs, and the islands became even more valuable to Russia.
- Deployment of SSMs "Bastion"(SSC-5) to the island(Etorofu Island) is intended to keep enemies away from the Sea of Okhotsk, which is a suitable area for new Borei-class and other SSBN (deployed at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky) activities.

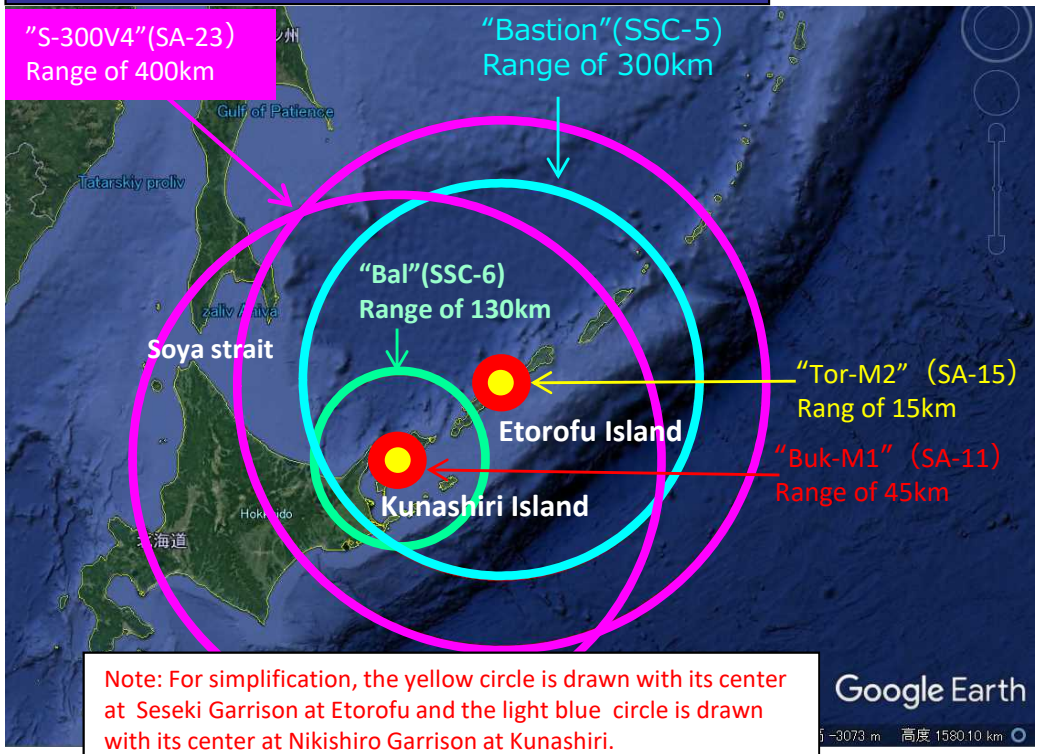
*"Bastion(fortress)": U.S. DoD report "Soviet Military Power 1989," etc., refer to "bastion" as the ex-Soviet SSBN's operating area close to its territory protected by using shore, naval, and air assets in conjunction with topographical features. The Russian Northern fleet and Pacific fleet are believed to set "bastion" around the Barents Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk respectively.

**According to Russian MOD, Pacific Fleet conducted survey to consider deployment of Russian forces at Matua island from 2016 and built an airfield based on former Japanese air base in 2017. In December 2020, the Russian MOD-owed media reported that AFRF had deployed surface-to-air missile (SAM) system "S-300V4"(SA-23) to the Islands of Etorofu and Kunashiri. In November 2017,Russian newspaper Izvestiya reported that Russian Navy Staff plans deployment of coastal surface-to-ship missile (SSM) system to Matua and Paramushir islands.

Deployment of Russian military forces around Japan



Ranges of SSMs/SAMs (for illustrative purposes)



Note: For simplification, the yellow circle is drawn with its center at Seseki Garrison at Etorofu and the light blue circle is drawn with its center at Nikishiro Garrison at Kunashiri.