

Non-Subscriber Extract

Russia's 'Shipwreck' missile enigma solved

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Russia's 'Shipwreck' missile enigma solved

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Newly released information and photographs have lifted the veil of secrecy long surrounding Russia's P-700 Granit long-range anti-ship missile (SS-N-19 'Shipwreck'), regarded as the most feared Soviet anti-ship cruise missile of the Cold War era.

It also reveals Granit as the progenitor of the Yakhont supersonic anti-ship missile, which designer NPO Mashinostroyeniye is now marketing for export.

The bureau says Granit was conceived in the late 1970s specifically to interdict US carrier battle groups. Both conventional and nuclear warheads can be deployed.

The Oscar II-class submarine Kursk, lost in the Barents Sea in August 2000, had conducted a Granit live-firing trial just before it went down. A further 22 missiles are reportedly still aboard the wreck, due to be salvaged from the seabed later this month.

Although Granit entered service with the Soviet Navy in the 1980s, it has remained an enigma. The missile has not been displayed at defence exhibitions, and no photographs or information pertaining to the weapon had previously been released in open press.

However, Russian and Western media have now gained access to performance characteristics and photographs of the SS-N-19, revealing it to be a very different, ramjet-powered supersonic missile. Pictures show a cylindrical missile body - appearing to bulge slightly outward in its mid-section - with an annular front air intake, two small upper body wings and cruciform tail surfaces.

Capable of striking targets 500km away, Granit was developed as part of a wider reconnaissance and strike system that assimilated and integrated intelligence and targeting data from various sources.

The concept of operations developed in the Cold War sees the missiles launched in salvo. Following launch, the booster is jettisoned and the ramjet takes over to bring the missile up to a speed of about M2.5.

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The Granit missile is capable of striking targets 500km away
(Source: NPO Mashinostroyeniye)

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