

***The United Nations Disarmament and International Security
Committee***



***Measures for Supervising the Potential Creation and
Development of Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles
(SLBM), With Special Regards to the Newly-Created
Poseidon-Like Missiles That Are Carried by Belgorod
Submarines***

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I. Introduction

Ballistic missiles that can be launched by a submarine are known as submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). They were created during the First World War, and since then, they have undergone numerous alterations. The USA, Russia, China, the UK, India, France, and North Korea are now in possession of a number of these futuristic weapons. Its more recent variations frequently carry multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), each of which houses a nuclear payload and enables the attack of several targets with a single missile.

One of these SLBMs, Russia's Belgorod, has sparked a number of contentious arguments regarding Russia's upcoming move in the context of international affairs. Belgorod currently holds the status of the longest submarine in the world. It is thought by military experts to be a more recent version of Russia's Oscar II class guided-missile submarines, upgraded to possibly fit the first nuclear underwater ranged weapon as well as technology for intelligence gathering.

One of the missiles that Belgorod might potentially carry is the Poseidon, a devastating nuclear weapon formerly known by its Russian designation "Status 6." In 2018, the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review revealed that Russia was developing a "new intercontinental, nuclear armed, nuclear powered, undersea autonomous torpedo." The Russian Navy made plans to seize at least 30 Poseidon systems stationed on four submarines in January 2019. As a result, it was announced on January 16, 2023, that the first batch of these missiles had been manufactured.

The following statement was released by American submarine expert H. I. Sutton on his website, Navy News: "This nuclear 'mega torpedo' is unprecedented in the history of the globe." That prompts worries about the near-term stability of the nuclear system. Being one of Russia's most dreaded weapons, it alters the nature of nuclear deterrence. The development and production of these military technologies could create conditions for additional unrest, danger, and conflict on a global scale.

II. Definition of key terms

Ballistic missiles = a type of missile that uses projectile motion to deliver warheads (the forward section of the device that contains the explosive agent or toxic material) on a target;

Independently targetable reentry vehicles = an exoatmospheric (high-altitude) ballistic missile which contains several warheads, each capable of being aimed to hit a different target;

Class guided-missile submarines = submarines equipped with a missile, belonging to a specific class of weaponry;

Nuclear Posture Review = a legislatively-mandated review that establishes U.S. nuclear policy, strategy, capabilities and force posture for the next five to ten years;

Torpedo = a submarine-led explosive device

Nuclear deterrence = the military idea that a country's enemy will be deterred from using nuclear weapons as long as he can be destroyed in consequence (mutually assured destruction)

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty = an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to cease the construction of a national anti-ballistic missile system.

The Department of Defence Cooperative Threat / Nuun-Lugar program = created with the purpose of securing and dismantling weapons of mass destruction and their associated infrastructure in former Soviet Union states.

III. History

I. The origins of the ballistic missile

German engineers created the initial concepts for a launch pad moored by a submarine near the conclusion of World War 2. They consisted of a launch tube pulled by a submarine that held the first generation of long-range guided ballistic missiles. Following the end of the war, the engineers who worked on the prototype were sent to both the US and the Soviet Union. The early variants were eventually modified to enable underwater launch in the 1950s. The Soviet Union, which at the time was developing Project 611 - its first post-war attack submarines - launched the first SLBM in history. The first operational ballistic missiles in the world were five further programs that followed suit. They went into service between 1956 and 1957.

II. Ballistic missile development in the context of the Cold War

First, the US army began to envision sea-based versions of engineers' already completed work, predicting four missiles per submarine. The USS George Washington, which entered service in December 1959 and carried out its first deterrent patrol from November 1960 to January 1961, was the world's first operational nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). It included 16 missiles. The Soviet Union adopted the same strategy forty days later. In terms of technology, they were just one year behind.

Two new SBLMs were introduced to the US between 1967 and 1981. The US-made Poseidon missile, which could carry 14 warheads, went into service in the early 1970s. In the late 1970s, the Trident I and II missiles were introduced. The Typhoon, the largest submarine ever constructed and equipped with 20 missiles, was a Soviet invention.

III. Recent developments

Production was stopped for ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the US also stopped manufacturing. In 2012, the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction pact gradually reduced the size of the majority of the former Soviet Union's SSBN force. Since that moment, both nations have increased their efforts and the number of resources invested in this area, although none of their recent activities have raised as many concerns as the Belgorod submarine and its Poseidon missile.

IV. Key Issues

Vulnerable underwater infrastructure

Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, concerns for Russia's military capabilities and the danger they pose towards infrastructure, especially the critical kind such as undersea cables, have steadily grown. Ever since then, there have been increasing Russian deployments of submarines. In 2017, U.S. Navy Admiral Andrew Lennon, the commander of NATO's submarine forces, stated the following: "We are now seeing Russian underwater activity in the vicinity of undersea cables that I don't believe we have ever seen. Russia is clearly taking an interest in NATO and NATO nations' undersea infrastructure." In 2018, their submarine presence was the highest ever in the past 25 years, according to reported data. Russia's closeness to undersea cables could be proof of its doubtfully honest intentions regarding submarine usage.

Certain underwater cables are the basis of the modern global economy. They take up nearly all of the communications on the Internet; if severed, they could shut it down. If tapped, they could give Russia valuable information regarding Western communications. They are of utmost practical importance to the modern world.

Now, the manufacture of the submarine Belgorod and its missile, Poseidon, proves itself to be the new challenge faced by the West due to Russia. The new tool could act in favour of Russia's potential interests in underwater infrastructure. However, even in the situation of no such past interference or intention of meddling with undersea cables, the potential for such destruction could be a worrying premise for the West; a possibility that could change our current political climate.

Strategic concern for the West

The Arctic is a growing factor in NATO defence policy. Russia has beefed up its Northern Fleet in recent years, adding air-defence systems, missile depots, and new ships. Russian submarine activity is at its highest level since the cold war, according to NATO commanders. Russia primarily uses its attack submarines to defend a "bastion", the area in the Barents Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk where its own nuclear-armed ballistic-missile submarines patrol. But some NATO admirals worry that, in a conflict, some could pose a wider threat to the alliance. A separate Russian naval force known as the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research (GUGI, in its Russian acronym) might also target the thicket of cables that cross the Atlantic. A new generation of Russian ship-based missiles could strike NATO ships or territory from far north of the GIUK gap, perhaps even from the safety of home ports.

Furthermore, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy, Admiral Nikolai Evmenov, announced the development of a new generation of submarines. The Navy is focused on developing the potential of nuclear submarine groupings as part of the submarine forces of the Northern and Pacific Fleets, as the Russian navy has now six submarines capable of launching Bulava missiles.

V. Major parties involved

At the moment, it is believed that only a few countries are in possession of nuclear-powered strategic submarines, those in question being as follows: the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, the French Republic, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Out of all the aforementioned countries, it is the United States Navy that currently operates the biggest fleet of ballistic missile submarines, consisting of 14 submarines each weighing approximately 19.000 tons. The French Republic and the United Kingdom are next with 4 SSBNs each, with the UK using *Vanguard*-class submarines that weigh roughly 16.000 tons, and France opting for the 14.300-ton *Triomphant* class. The Russian Federation's Navy deploys 4 24.000-ton *Borei I* class SSBNs, 6 18.200-ton *Delta IV* class SSBNs, 1 *Delta III (Ryazan)*, and lastly, one giant Dmitry Donskoy *Typhoon* class, weighing in at a staggering 48.000 tons. The Chinese fleet consists of at least four, possibly 6 *Jin*-class SSBNs, and one *Xia*-class SSBN. The People's Republic of China also operates a sole *Type 032 "Qing"* class boat, a diesel-electric submarine currently being used as a missile-firing testbed for the People's Liberation Army Navy. The "*Qing*" class is said to be the world's largest conventional submarine, with a submerged weight of 6.628 tons and a length of approximately 93 metres. Next on this list is the Republic of India, presenting itself with 3 SSBNs. The 8.000-ton *Arihant* was first introduced in 2016, being the first of its kind to be designed and built by India, and also the first SSBN to be built by a country other than one of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. The *Arihant* is designed to hold up to 12 K-15 missiles in four launchers, each launcher being equipped with one warhead with a range of 466 miles or four K-4 missiles with a range of 2174 miles. Moving on to the North Korean fleet, it is known that it possesses only one *Sinpo* class submarine, weighing in at 1.700 tons. It is the smallest SSB to date, and aside from China's *Qing*, the only diesel-powered one. According to U.S. intelligence, a new submarine, named *Sinpo-C* was recently detected by the U.S. Government. This submarine is said to be larger than the original *Sinpo*, to weigh about 2.000 tons, and possibly carry more than one SLBM. As of yet, its status is unknown and its specifications uncertain.

VI. Timeline

- **1955 September. 16:** The R-11FM becomes the first Soviet missile launched from a submarine stationed on the surface.
- **1959 December:** The USS George Washington entered service.
- **1966 September:** The United Kingdom launched its first submarine.
- **1969 - 1972:** Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (SALT I).
- **1972 - 1979:** Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (SALT II).
- **1972 - 2002:** The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABMT).
- **1977:** The construction of the Belgorod and two similar SSGNs is stopped because of the financial crisis.
- **1987 December. 8:** The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty).
- **1991 December. 12:** Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act.
- **1992 November. 9:** Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.
- **1992 July. 24:** Russian Submarine Belgorod was laid down.
- **1997 March. 21:** first ballistic missile submarine enters service in France.
- **2002 May. 24:** Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions between the United States of America and the Russian Federation (also known as the Treaty of Moscow).
- **2016:** first Indian ballistic missile submarine is introduced.
- **2018:** Russian President Vladimir Putin announces the existence of the Poseidon system during his State of the Nation address.

- **2019 April. 23:** Russian submarine Belgorod is launched.
- **2022 July:** Belgorod Submarine is tested; a ballistic missile is launched from the White Sea toward the Kura impact range on the Kamchatka Peninsula.

VII. Evaluation of Previous Attempts

After technological developments in the matter of submarine-launched missiles debuted in September of 1955, along with the R-11FM's first launch by the Soviet Union at the time, other countries of the world started working on regulations regarding the use of SLBMs. The first instance of such actions dates back to 1969, when the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement was signed by the Soviet Union and the United States of America in Helsinki.

The SALT I agreement led to the US and the Soviet Union signing the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty or ABMT) in 1972. 5 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, four former Soviet republics agreed with the US to succeed in the USSR's role in the treaty. 5 years after this, in June of 2002, the United States of America withdrew from the treaty, leading to its termination.

VIII. Possible solutions

Disarmament treaties

Regulating the engineering and manufacture of SBLMS could be the key to mending security concerns in the international community. This could be achieved through a treaty, such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972-2002), or through other forms of diplomacy and negotiation between countries, with special regards towards those which possess this type of armament.

Demilitarized zones

Demilitarised zones could help mitigate military tensions between countries in possession of SBLMs. This type of agreement will discourage any potential military action, increasing the security in the signatory countries. However, implementing an ocean-based DMZ would be a first in the history of the world.

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