STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

Why has Russia deployed nuclear warship in Artic's Severomorsk?

International Relations

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What?

Russia has stationed its most powerful nuclear-powered surface warship, Admiral Nakhimov, at the strategic Arctic naval base of Severomorsk, a move seen as strengthening Moscow's nuclear deterrence and sending a strong message to Nato as the war in Ukraine enters a new phase.

The deployment comes as Ukraine has launched a 40-day campaign of long-range drone strikes aimed at increasing military pressure on Russia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had approved the operation to force Moscow towards ending the war.

Against this backdrop, the return of the Admiral Nakhimov after nearly 29 years of refurbishment marks a major boost to Russia's naval capabilities, according to Military Watch Magazine.

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Why Severomorsk matters?

Severomorsk, located above the Arctic Circle, is the headquarters of Russia's Northern Fleet and one of the country's most heavily protected military bases.

The base hosts the command responsible for many of Russia's nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines, making it central to Moscow's sea-based nuclear deterrent.

Despite its Arctic location, the warm North Atlantic Drift keeps nearby Kola Bay ice-free throughout the year, allowing Russian warships to quickly access the Barents Sea and the North Atlantic.

Its location also provides direct access to the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap, a strategic maritime chokepoint that has long been viewed as critical in any potential confrontation between Russia and Nato.

Key role in Russia's nuclear strategy

According to the report, the Admiral Nakhimov is expected to play a major role in protecting Russia's "bastion" defence zone in the Barents Sea.

The heavily defended area is designed to shield Russia's ballistic missile submarines, ensuring they can survive any attack and maintain the country's ability to launch a retaliatory nuclear strike if required.

The cruiser is equipped with advanced air-defence, anti-submarine warfare and anti-ship capabilities, making it one of the most heavily armed surface warships in the world.

During the Cold War, Kirov-class cruisers were intended to hunt Nato aircraft carrier groups, escort Soviet naval formations and protect nuclear submarine patrol areas. While Russia no longer operates aircraft carriers in the same role, protecting its submarine fleet remains a top military priority.

Return after nearly 3 decades

The Admiral Nakhimov recently returned to Severomorsk after spending almost 29 years undergoing repairs and extensive modernisation.
Its deployment signals Russia's continued focus on strengthening its strategic nuclear forces, even as the Ukraine conflict stretches into another year.

With Ukraine expanding its deep-strike operations and Russia reinforcing its strategic naval assets in the Arctic, both sides appear to be strengthening their military posture, underscoring the continuing intensity of the conflict and the broader strategic competition involving Nato.