INTELLIGENCE WORLD
ANALYSIS

RUSSIAN FEDERATION NAVY

Russian Military Sealift from Baltiysk

Merchant Vessels and Russian Navy Ship Movements

DATE
October-November 2026

GEOGRAPHIC AREA
Baltic Sea / Atlantic Ocean / Mediterranean Sea

INTELLIGENCE DOMAIN
Naval Operations / OSINT / Strategic Affairs

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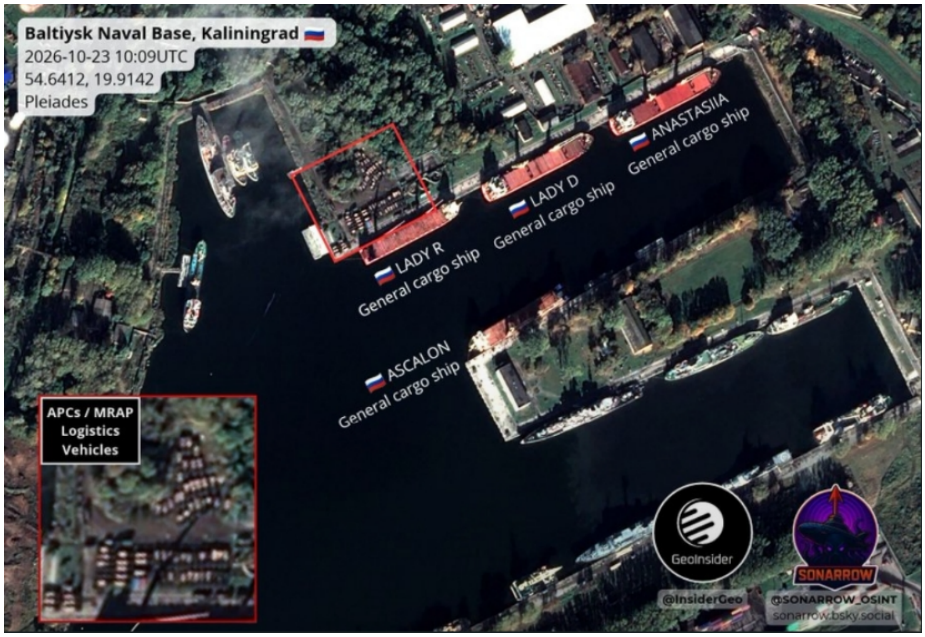
SCOPE AND CONTEXT

The Russian Federation merchant fleet, is a component of naval power, occupying one of the most important places among the individual communication and transport carriers. The great importance for Russia's balance of payments, the high valuation of its economy, the demand for transport capacity, the many possibilities of use within and beyond the borders of the state, are the reasons for the enormous political and economic importance of the merchant fleet.

The Russian merchant fleet also perform purely military tasks, which are of extraordinary importance in both peacetime and wartime. Their scope, thanks to modern cargo and special vessels with well-trained personnel deployed in the various maritime areas of strategic interest, ranges from the logistical support/shipment of military material to transport of troops and support for military operations.

OBSERVED LOADING ACTIVITY

In October 2026, commercial satellite images identified a large-scale Russian military loading operation at the Baltiysk naval base, that is described by various open source as a usual assembly point for Russian cargo vessels which head for the Mediterranean or West Africa. Between Oct 15th and 16th 2026, in the naval base was observed three Russian cargo vessels ASCALON (IMO: 9198226), LADY D (IMO: 9349289) and ANASTASIIA (IMO: 9349291), loading significant quantities of military equipment. According to the same open-source information, logistics vehicles, infantry vehicles, MRAPs and troops transports would have been loaded, suggesting the upcoming departure of the ships. In addition to the cargo vessels described above, a subsequent commercial satellite image of October 23rd, 2026, showed the presence of a fourth cargo vessel, the LADY R (IMO: 9161003), which also allegedly intends on loading operation.



Russian cargo ships and concentration of military equipment at the Russian Baltic Fleet base in Baltiysk. October 23, 2026. Satellite image Plèiades/GeoInsider, SONARROW_OSINT

MERCANT VESSELS MOVEMENTS

Departure of the first convoy

On Oct 31st, 2026, a Russian convoy composed by the cargo vessels ANASTASIIA (IMO: 9349291) and ASCALON (IMO: 9198226), were seen left Baltiysk heading west. Together with them, the Steregushchiy-class corvette STOIKIY (545) as escorting ship and the Altay-class replenishment ship YELNYA as logistic support ship. On Nov 3rd, 2026, the corvette STOIKIY returned to the Baltic Sea while the convoy, including the Altay-class replenishment ship YELNYA, continued southwards.



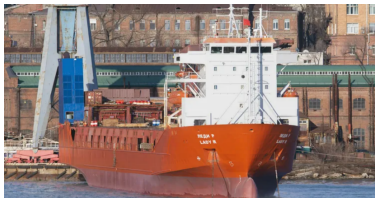
On Nov 6th, 2026, the convoy entered the English Channel while on Nov 11th, 2026, they reached the western part of Strait of Gibraltar (STROG). During the night hours between Nov 13-14, 2026, the Russian Navy Altay-class supply ship YELNYA, in company with the ANASTASIIA and ASCALON cargo vessels, transited the STROG entering the Mediterranean Sea. From that moment, the YELNYA started loitering the Alboran sea, while no information regarding the two merchant vessels, since they allegedly deactivated the Automatic Identification System (AIS), hiding their position.





Departure of the second convoy

On Nov 5th, 2026, a second Russian convoy consisting of the cargo vessels LADY R (IMO: 9161003), LADY D (IMO: 9349289) and MAIA-1 (IMO: 9358010), left Baltiysk. Waiting for them, the STOIKIY corvette that after accompanying ASCALON and ANASTASIIA cargo vessels in the Baltic Sea, started a further escort operation. During the early morning of Nov 8th, 2026, the three cargo vessels were located on Kattegat (Baltic Sea) and subsequently they were located on the English Channel (Nov 11th, 2026). Later, the three merchant vessels deactivated the Automatic Identification System (AIS), hiding their position.





RUSSIAN NAVY SHIP MOVEMENT

On November 2nd, 2026, the Northern Fleet Gorshkov-class frigate ADMIRAL GOLOVKO (456), left the main base of Severomorsk heading for the Atlantic, for a deployment tasks in various areas of the world's ocean, according to Russian Navy officials.



ASSESSMENT

Since 2024, Russian cargo ships have been transporting military equipment from Russian ports to West Africa and Libya for final delivery to African Corps personnel. Furthermore, subsequent to Moscow lost the Tartus port (Syria), since 2025 several Russian cargo ships returned to Tartus to unload military equipment. As for these latest movements of Russian convoys, the processing and analysis of the available open source, would suggest that:

the first Russian convoy composed by the cargo vessels ANASTASIIA and ASCALON, once had crossed the Strait of Gibraltar eastbound would have turned off their AIS presuming a possible deliberate concealment of their route. Despite this, it is likely that the most accredited destinations may be Tobruk (Libya), the main Mediterranean entry point for Russian military shipments to Africa and/or Tartus (Syria), for delivery of cargo to the Russian airbase at Hmeimim, probably connected to the possible future configuration of the Russian military presence in Syria.

the second Russian convoy consisting of the cargo vessels LADY R, LADY D and MAIA-1, allegedly along the Portuguese coast with south-central Atlantic Ocean direction, at the moment there are no information on their destination, which, however, could include the Mediterranean Sea or the Gulf of Guinea.

If the convoy will proceed to Mediterranean (possible crossing of the STROG around November 17th or 18th, 2026), their destination could be, as for the first convoy, Tobruk (Libya) and/or Tartus (Syria). If, on the other hand, they continue the South Atlantic Ocean, the destination could be one or more of the strategic transit hubs of Gulf of Guinea, such as Conakry (Guinea), Lomé (Togo) and Pointe-Noire (Republic of the Congo), used by Russia to move military material to the Russian military forces elsewhere in the Sahel.

As for the Gorshkov-class frigate ADMIRAL GOLOVKO, currently allegedly in the Atlantic Ocean, over the coming months she will be involved in missions in various parts of the globe, that could include Mediterranean Sea, around Africa and Middle East. The presence of the GOLOVKO in Naval Diplomacy activities in those strategic and critical regions for alleged period of six months, is intended to guarantee the naval presence and surveillance for the protection of the SLOC of Russian interests, enhance every opportunity for collaboration with the navies of the visiting countries and strengthen ties with the highest military and institutional offices, carry out promotional activities to strengthen commercial and military partnerships for export purposes, balance/hinder any adversarial military developments that are not favorable to Russia and to create a counterweight to a competing maritime presence.