

DEFENSE

Navalized Ka-52 Alligator Makes Public Debut in Russia

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The Ka-52K prototype has been shown in public for the first time. The new Kh-35V version of the anti-ship missile was shown alongside. (Photo: Vladimir Karnozov)

The prototype Kamov Ka-52K Katran, a navalized version of Ka-50/52 Alligator family already in Russian air force service, has made its public debut. It was briefly exposed to visitors attending the Army 2015 expo in Kubinka near Moscow in mid-June. Then it was exhibited at International Maritime Defense Show (IMDS 2015) in St. Petersburg in early July. The Russian defense ministry ordered 32 Ka-52Ks in April 2015, and the prototype flew for the first time on March 7, 2015. Its first application was intended to be on the two Mistral-class amphibious assault vessels ordered from France, delivery of which is currently embargoed.

Speaking to journalists at IMDS 2015, Kamov general designer Sergei Mikheyev said the Ka-52K version has a reworked rotor system with elastomeric bearings in blade-mast attachment points for higher takeoff weights. "This allows for an increase in the overall combat efficiency of the helicopter and extends its tactical capabilities," Mikheyev added. He also touched on the work being done to enable Arctic operations and to strengthen the stub wings for heavier weapon loads.

Shown alongside the Ka-52K were two air-surface missiles from the Tactical Missiles Corporation (Russian acronym: TRV), a Kh-38MLE and a Kh-35VE. The baseline Kh-38 belongs to the new generation of TRV missiles and differs from the popular Kh-25 that it replaces by being able to fit inside to weapons bays of fifth-generation stealth fighters such as the PAKFA (Sukhoi T-50). The laser-guided missile was formally accepted into Russian air force service in December 2012. TRV has advertised the possibility of fitting the Kh-38, which weighs 520 kg (1,146 pounds), to helicopters. But only the Ka-52K has emerged so far as a suitable type to carry the weapon.

The baseline Kh-35 entered service in 1996 on Indian navy Delhi class destroyers, and later was supplied to the navies of Algeria, Kazakhstan and Vietnam. It also won orders from Myanmar, North Korea and Turkmenistan. The air-launched version

entered service in 2005 on Indian navy Ilyushin Il-38SD ASW aircraft outfitted with the Sea Dragon sensor set. Because of the many similarities with the Boeing AGM-84, the Kh-35 was nicknamed “Harpoonski.”

The version for launch from helicopters—the Kh-35V—is a relatively new development, not yet operational. It features an enlarged solid-fuel booster, which increases its gross weight from 480 kg to 610 to 650 kg (approximately 1,400 pounds). The length increases from 3.85 meters to 4.4 meters (14.5 feet).

Development of the Kh-35V was announced in 2009. Later, its design was unified with the Kh-35U/UE—a new, universal missile ordered by the Russian navy—which required an increase in range from 130 km to 260 to 300 km (approximately 150 nm). The Kh-35U features a new turbofan engine that runs on “another fuel” and reworked air inlet and channeling, yet keeps weight and dimensions from the ancestor. The newer version is likely to be referred to as the Kh-35UV/UVE. Instead of the ARG-35 active radar head, it will have the Gran-K with longer range. It will use satellite navigation technologies and interact with external target designation sources.

The Ka-52K itself carries the Arbalet-52 radar with parabolic antenna and mechanical scanning. But its developer KRET is now offering a more powerful AESA radar with detection ranges increased from 25 to 100 km to over 200 km (more than 100 nm), “so as to provide extended-range targeting capability for the air-launched missiles including the Kh-31 and Kh-35.”

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