

# Many ships on the move

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*Bible prophecy shows that Magog (the king of the north) and Tarshish are significant sea powers at the time of the end. Recent reports relating to the navies of Russia and Britain have provided evidence that the fulfilment of this aspect of prophecy is developing.*

## The Russian navy

IN EZEKIEL 38 it is written, “Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD [Yahweh]; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords” (vv. 2-4). These verses show that the Russian power of Magog will have a powerful army. But we also learn from Daniel 11 that he will have “many ships” (v. 40). There have been recent significant deployments by the Russian navy which show that the naval force required by this prophecy is being developed.

Writing in the journal *Warships—International Fleet Review*, Usman Ansari and Guy Toremans, who detail these deployments, link these developments with “the Kremlin’s determination to ensure Russia is recognised as a leading global power with military might to match”.<sup>1</sup> This fits with the way Gog is depicted in Bible prophecy.

In early 2009 a detachment of ships from the Russian Northern Fleet, with the aircraft carrier *Admiral Kuznetsov* in the vanguard, entered the Mediterranean to take part in a naval exercise with the Russian Black Fleet. There were also some exercises involving the Turkish navy. Meanwhile, the battle cruiser *Peter the Great*, having been part of a Russian deployment to the Caribbean in November, headed south, calling in at Cape Town

in South Africa in January en route to a bilateral exercise with the Indian navy, code-named INDRA 2009. Ships from Russia’s Pacific Fleet would also be involved in INDRA 2009.

In addition to this activity, Ansari and Toremans also state how the Russians have been denying reports, emanating from an anonymous source cited by the Itar-Tass news agency, that they plan to have naval bases in Libya, Syria and Yemen. Although Russia denies these reports, Ansari and Toremans note that in November the Libyans were reported as offering the Russians a naval base in Benghazi.<sup>2</sup> They also note that, in January of this year, the task group led by the *Admiral Kuznetsov*, together with the destroyer *Admiral Levchenko* and the support ship *Nikolay Chiker*, docked at Tartus in Syria. This port has been identified by analysts as a potential base for Russian ships.



**The Russian fleet moored at the Baltic port of Riga, Latvia.**

Picture: © iStockphoto.com/Dainis Derics

1. Ansari, U. and Toremans, G. (2009), “Global Navies in Focus”, *Warships—International Fleet Review*, Mar., pp. 6-8.
2. See Bernard, N. (2008), “[Libya and Russia](#)”, *Testimony*, Dec., pp. 323-4.



**The British aircraft carrier *Ark Royal* moored at Portsmouth.**

Picture: © iStockphoto.com/Paul Mckeown

In further developments, in March 2009 the Russian News & Information Agency, RIA Novosti, reported that Russian deputy defence Minister General Vladimir Popovkin had announced plans to strengthen Russian military forces in the south.<sup>3</sup> These plans follow a review of the conflict in Georgia. With regard to troops on the ground, they would be supplied with new multiple-rocket-launching systems. They would also have an increase in supply of weapons and other military equipment. With regard to the air force, “the modernization of MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters and Su-25 Frogfoot ground attack planes and Mi-28H Night Hunger helicopter gunships is to be completed and new warplanes . . . and combat helicopters . . . will be supplied”. Air defence will be enhanced with new Pantsir-S surface-to-air missiles. Meanwhile, the navy in the south is to receive new Lada Project 677 diesel-electric submarines and Bal-U mobile coastal missile systems. That these developments relate to the south of Russia is significant, because it is from this area that the invasion spoken of in Ezekiel 38 will be launched.

### The British navy

The phrase “ships of Tarshish” (Ps. 48:7; Isa. 60:9) indicates that Tarshish, which refers to Britain, will be a naval power at the time of the end. Furthermore, we expect Britain, as the king of the south (Dan. 11:40) and one of the “mountains of brass” (Zech. 6:1), to have a presence in the Middle East at the time of the end. A

recent proposal made by Gordon Brown can be linked with these prophecies.

On 17 January 2009 the BBC reported that “Prime Minister Gordon Brown has offered British naval resources to help monitor events in the Gaza conflict and stop weapons being smuggled in”.<sup>4</sup> As reported by Charles Strathdee in *Warships*, this offer was again stated by the prime minister at an International Summit held in Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt on 18 January.<sup>5</sup> In a press interview on

3. <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20090305/120443247.html>.
4. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7835302.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7835302.stm).
5. Strathdee, C. (2009), “Israel’s naval war on Gaza—Royal Navy Mission looms in aftermath”, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.



**The Red Sea resort of Sharm el Sheikh, scene of an international summit in January to discuss Gaza.**

Picture: © iStockphoto.com/Gert Kelu

Monday 19 January 2009 the prime minister stated that "Britain is prepared to give naval resources so that we can monitor and stop arms traffic and arms getting into Gaza".<sup>6</sup>

Should this offer be accepted, the Type 23 frigate *HMS St Albans* may be involved, having left the British port of Portsmouth in January for a tour of duty in the Mediterranean. Another ship which could be involved is the Type 23 *HMS Richmond*, which was originally intended for the protection of Iraqi oil infrastructure in the Gulf.

As Strathdee reports, the announcement has caused political disquiet in Britain. Whilst the prime minister's offer focused on the halting of arms smuggling, others wished to see equal focus on ensuring aid supplies reach the Palestinians. Interestingly, a former Labour minister, Frank Dobson, in advocating that the British navy should also be involved with the supply of aid to Gaza, spoke of restoring "the Royal Navy to its ancient task of ensuring the freedom of the seas and breaking blockades". This is interesting because the invoking of Britain's historic naval role is in line with what would be expected from Bible prophecy.

The proposed involvement of the British navy in preventing arms smuggling is fraught with difficulty, not only in the carrying out of the role, but also with regard to the competing views and issues which surround it. Not least is the perception

by some that Britain would essentially be taking the side of Israel and indirectly supporting the Israeli navy, which has been active off the Gaza coast. Furthermore, such a proposed deployment is set against a background of the British navy already being overstretched.

From a Biblical perspective, the very fact that the naval profile of Britain is being raised is significant, especially as it involves Israel. Strathdee ends his article with the words, "at least the current UK government has woken up to the utility of sea power". Joel 3:9 states: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up". The might which Tarshish will deploy at the time of the end will centre round its ships. Some will be broken: "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind" (Ps. 48:7). Others will be used to bring Jews and their wealth to Israel: "Surely the isles shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee" (Isa. 60:9). In the meantime, that Britain "has woken up" is a sign that the command "wake up the mighty men" is being fulfilled.

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6. <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page18077>.