

IS RUSSIAN MILITARY BACK ON IT'S FEET

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When on 15th of October 2008 Russia officially announced a decision to reform its armed forces some observers were very fast to claim this as a new adventurist's move of Russian political and military leadership. Almost nobody took it seriously. Today the situation is different with more and more specialists and officials pointing at the Russian army and recognising it as an emerging threat. How did this happen that we became caught in surprise again? Why did nobody pay any attention to what was going on in the Russian Army, or if somebody did, why nobody took them seriously. Those and other questions still remain to be answered.

Already in the beginning of 2010 it became obvious that this reform was different. At the same time a number of indicators also showed that the reform had reached a point where it was not possible to return back. I already presented my thoughts regarding this in my studies of 2010 (Petraitis 2011) and 2012 (Petraitis 2012). In this article (and presentation) I will repeat only some which according my point of view are the most evident and important. Other things I am going to discuss here are related to new evidence and recent changes in the Russian military.

I am still convinced that the recent reform is different compared to previous ones. Firstly, it was theoretically based and field tested. Secondly from the beginning it has been seriously run with no indications showing that the political leadership is going to give up. I still argue that the true reform started far before its official announcement in October 2008. It started as soon as the military doctrine of 2000 was announced. Following it, in the fall of 2003, the Russian MOD headed by S. Ivanov and the General Staff presented a recent document known as the 'Doctrine of Ivanov'. This doctrine transferred political requirements for a new military into political-military ones, declared the

level of the country's ambitions and announced new requirements for the military. To get this implemented the General Staff developed an entire plan, which was presented to the MOD board in September 2005. The plan was made after deep analysis of a transformation which had been done in the US military five–six years before and which allowed the US to perform outstandingly in Iraq and other following wars and missions. It proposed a drastic change. In the process of the reform it was foreseen to dismantle an entire old Soviet type Army and to build new military forces. They had to be very similar to the USA forces. They had to be a new generation forces, fully reshaped and able to conduct military operations and other missions differently. The proposal was so revolutionary that a great number of former Soviet generals refused to support it at that time. S. Ivanov stepped back by offering to name all this as an experiment and to do more theory testing in the fields and HQs. But at the same time he stated that the reform would take place at any cost and as a result of the change hundreds of generals would be retired. We do not know if it was his confidence or the generals' fear of being fired that played the decisive role, but at the end the agreement was achieved.

What was new in the 'Doctrine of Ivanov' and the General Staff plan? The doctrine stated that the new forces have to be:

capable in a peacetime and in times of emergencies to maintain a potential of strategic deterrence and continue to fulfil tasks of combat readiness. It will be able to fight successfully **simultaneously two military conflicts on any type and to participate in one peacekeeping type operation** alone or together with international force by using only forces of constant combat readiness without any mobilization and preparation actions.¹

¹Original text 'Вооруженные силы РФ должны быть способны в мирное время и в чрезвычайных ситуациях, сохраняя потенциал стратегического сдерживания и выполняя задачи поддержания боеготовности, войсками (силами) постоянной готовности без проведения дополнительных мобилизационных мероприятий успешно решать задачи одновременно в двух вооруженных конфликтах

Besides other recommendations, the plan suggested a solution to achieve this by creating operational and institutional forces. The first ones will be the forces ready to fight any time and the second ones will be the framework allowing the first one to exit and operate.

Proposals had been tested for more than two years. To get the right people to test the reform, and later to implement it, all personnel appointments were concentrated in hands of Army General N. Pankov. He became a State Secretary in the MOD in 2005 and since then remains in that place. Under his supervision a strange appointing policy was adopted and kept until the official beginning of the reform. This policy was expressed by a practice to appoint some commanders by the President's decree and others by the Defence Minister's order. Trusted commanders, appointed by the President, like General-colonels V. Bulgakov, A. Postnikov, N. Tkachov, A. Zelin, Vice-admirals V. Mardusin, N. Maksimov, K. Sedenko were conducting reform tests in a newly created experimental HQ headed by N. Tkachov and during exercises in Siberia and other places. Those, appointed by the minister, like Admiral V. Visockij or General-colonels V. Gerasimov or N. Makarov still had to prove their loyalty and only later were reappointed by the President. As soon as the reform was launched officially this practice ended.

As has already been mentioned the new military had to be split into operational and institutional forces. The first ones were supposed to have a three level C2: a joint strategic command (JSC) in strategic level, an operational command (OC) in operational level and a brigade in tactical level. The new brigade with its four artillery battalions and antiaircraft artillery element was designed to have its fire support capabilities almost the same as previous division had.

The reform has been run in stages. The first one, which is to last until the end of 2015, has a task to finish all structural changes in operational

любого типа, а также осуществлять миротворческие операции как самостоятельно, так и в составе многонациональных контингентов, Виктор Мясников, (note 2), underlining by the author.

and institutional forces, to get planned units formed and to rearm with new modernised weaponry. A majority of operational forces consisting of new type brigades, OCs and JSCs was created within the first years of the reform. In 2010 almost all structures presented in the schema (Petraitis 2012) below already existed. Some adjustments like creation of Artic forces, which are announced to be a separate operational forces block with its own JSC, OC and tactical structures, have been announced recently but they fit nicely into this scheme as well.



The institutional forces are supposed to perform other than combat activities and are related as an example to strategic command at state level (MOD, General Staff, NSDCC), education, logistics and maintenance, mobilisation and other issues. The creation of forces started almost at the same time as of the operational ones. Military education and logistics became the first to be transformed. Military education system was restructured with dozens of military schools and academies disbanded and thousands of teachers retired. From the side it might have looked like a chaotic distraction, as some kept saying, but quite soon a new logical system has appeared.

NEW RUSSIAN MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEM									
	GENERAL STAFF	LAND FORCES	AIR FORCES	NAVY	STRATEGIC MISSILES	NBC	SPACE FORCES	REAR	OTHER
TRAINING UNITS									
Science and research centers		1	1	1					
Academies	1	1				1	1	1	1
Military universities									1
Military schools		9	7	10	2	2	2	?	?

Russian military education system after reform²

Reform in the education system was launched alongside the operational forces with the purpose. At first it allowed to stop 'producing' big numbers of old type officers the new forces did not need. For some years entire admission into military schools was stopped and only when new forces started to appear in 2011 it was restored. Today, when forces are almost created and new officers requested, reshaped institutions are producing officers in numbers almost matching and even exceeding those of soviets times. As the MOD State Secretary Army General N. Pankov pointed out recently in his interview there were more than 15 000 cadets admitted into military schools and other training institutions in 2013.

A creation of an entirely new system of combat training of units is also under way. (Tikhonov 2013) Combat training centres are supposed to be located in each of the military districts (JSCs). The first such centre is planned to start in the JSC 'West' in December 2014. (Novoe Telegrafnoe Agentstvo Privolzh'e. 2014) Each centre will be capable to train an entire brigade at once. Annually it has to train up to ten brigades and around 30 thousand soldiers.

² For more on this topic see, Petraitis 2011.

Another important area where an intensive reformation took place was military administration and command and control. Since all operational forces became subordinated to adequate JSCs, supreme HQs of old military branches and troops became obsolete. Closing began. We could name as examples Naval C2 movements from city to city or General Staff command post reformation. The reform will touch former supreme commands of military branches and troops. They are destined to shrink and lose command over forces. They will be turned in to sort of departments in the MOD and be responsible for a wide range of issues related to the branch or troops support, specific research, preparation of normative documents, military education, manuals, technical requirements for armament and equipment and so on.

Still the most important in my point of view is the change of the General Staff. According to new General Staff regulations signed by the president of Russia back in 2013, the staff got new responsibilities. The old general staff was doing only strategic C2 for the forces belonging to the MOD. Now it will perform strategic C2 for all state institutions. To implement this, a command post of old general staff was transformed into a new structure – a national centre for coordination of state defence (NCCSD)³. The process began in July 2013. In March 2014 the centre began to work and is planned to reach its final operational capabilities at the end of 2014. (Nikitina 2013) The most important is a fact that the NSDCC is authorised to coordinate all defence related activities in peace and war time. This means that Russia already has a war time structure in place and no further transformation is required.

Besides standing operational forces, Russia still keeps a mobilisation idea alive. It will be different compared to the former Soviet one. The first wave of mobilised forces will be made from reservists. Creation of a new reserve system, by the way very similar to the US reserve system, is gaining speed. The Russian parliament (Duma) made necessary changes in laws (INTERFAKS-AVN, 2013a) introducing principles of formation and numbers of reserve. Government decisions (Gavrilov 2011) and MOD documents (Kulikov 2013) describe a way to organise activities of the reserve. (Gavrilov 2013) The new system was established in 1st

³ In russian 'Национального центра управления обороной государства (НЦУОИГ)

January 2013. The MOD system of reserve will guarantee a first wave of 250,000-300,000 reservists (50-60 brigades). The remaining in total 800,000 reservists (180 brigades), planned by the general staff, will come from other institutions. As an example a system of students training as reservists (Mukhin 2014) just started. It is supposed to provide 100,000-160,000 reservists annually. Reformed 'Voluntary support to army, aviation and navy' organisation (Russian name DOSAAF) (NG-NVO 2011) will train around 100,000 reservists annually plus has more than a couple of million more involved in other different military related activities. A newly established reserve OC, one per JSC, will supervise reserve brigades in the military district. (Ishchenko, 2013)

A logistic system of units in the peace time locations is almost finished. Here so called 'outsourcing' with a majority of functions transferred to civilian and commercial institution is created. In regard to issues related to servicing weaponry and equipment, a system oriented to provide entire life cycle maintenance and service by using military industrial complex capabilities, is being created now. (A. Tikhonov 2014) Besides that another system, tasked to provide maintenance and service for military equipment and armament by using MOD capabilities, is also being established. As deputy defence minister J. Borisov told journalists, the MOD would keep only 26 from 133 factories to repair military equipment and arms. The rest would be transferred to the military industrial complex with adequate contracts for repair and maintenance signed. (Voronin 2014) At the same time repair and maintenance elements were re-established in the units to be responsible for current maintenance and repair units weaponry in place. (Tikhonov 2014) A new military arsenal system foresees standardised arsenals spread among JSCs with approximately 400 soldiers in each. At the end of 2014 it should be first nine such arsenals and at the end of 2015 and the total number would grow up to 15. (INTERFAKS-AVN. 2013)

A new system of medical support foresees 33 medical brigades/groups (Gavrilov 2014) under the JSCs and MOD command being ready to act in emergencies and other cases. Education of military medical personnel is renewed. After four years of waiting, military medical institutes accepted around 600 students in 2013. Plans for the year 2014 are 400

students plus 200 more after a new medical faculty is opened in Penza. To match the required numbers, around 150 military doctors have been recalled to service. (Tikhonov, 2014) A system of daily military medical care and prophylaxis medicine is being renewed as well.

As it has already been mentioned rearming reformed forces with modernised weaponry is foreseen in the first stage of the reform. To achieve this a mass modernisation program was started. From each category of weapons certain models were selected, modernised and sent into units. As an example the T-72 tank was modernised to T-72 B3 level, which is almost equal to new T-90 A and C models. (Tikhonov, 2014) Similar things are done with armoured personnel carriers BTR, infantry fighting vehicles BMP3, artillery systems, aircrafts MIG, SU and so on. And modernised products go straight to the units. For example, the number of modernised T-72B3 provided to troops since 2012 range from 150 to 300 annually. A factory located in Arzamas producing BTR-82A infantry fighting vehicles is stated as being able to produce up to a thousand BTRs per year. (BTR-82A. 2013)

The second stage of the reform will put the emphasis on a new generation weapons. It is planned to start it from 2016. Recently deputy defence minister J. Borisov confirmed that by stating that a production of around 20 percent of recent weaponry types will be terminated and those weapons substituted by new type ones. (Voronin 2014) One of the most important criteria for any new type of a weapon will be standardisation. The military will try to use the same platforms to create different types of weapons. Of course a lot depends on Russia's success and ability to create new weaponry. There are plenty of ideas and wishes but not everything went as smoothly as was expected. For example the fifth generation T-50 jets keep experiencing problems during flight testing, (Denisov 2014) a new 'Armata' tank prototype was planned to be presented already in 2013 and taken into an armament in 2015 (Vladykin 2012) but even today it remains shrouded in mystery.

New weaponry requires adjusting of brigade structure. Already back in 2010-2011 the first messages about potential changes in new brigades appeared. (RIA Novosti 2011) Experimentation kept going and the first

drafts of reorganised new brigades already exist. Some time ago a General-Colonel A. Postnikov, at that time a commander of land forces, said that it would be only light, medium and heavy brigades in the land forces. (Topwar.ru 2011) Most probably light brigades will be armed by light wheeled transport vehicles as crossovers 'Tigr', 'Skorpion', 'Volk' or vehicles built on a new 'Taifoon' platform. Those brigades would have light antitank, antiaircraft defence weapons as well. (Military Russia.ru 2011) Medium and heavy brigades would rely on bigger wheeled and tracked platforms. Experimental wheeled platform was named as 'Bumerang', a tracked platform for medium brigades named as 'Kurganec', and for heavy brigades as 'Armata'. (Vladykin 2013)

There is a similar situation in other categories of arms (air, naval, air defence, missiles and so on) as well. The only difference from land weaponry is that it takes longer to get a new generation of a weapon and at the same time all those weapons possess further modernisation potential. But the tendencies remain the same. The emphasis is put on enhanced modernisation and increasing supplies into forces. At the same time creation of new types of arms is progressing.

To guarantee rearmament process ongoing and orders to be fulfilled on time the NSDCC is involved as well. A special event so called 'a day of acceptance of new armaments into forces' was held in the centre recently. During it the defence minister received reports from different factories about fulfilling orders and himself distributed new jets or tanks into units. (Tikhonov 2014) Most probably such events will continue because in the second stage of rearmament supply new weaponry must become massive (INTERFAKS-AVN. 2014) and reach 70 percent of new arms in the forces level marked by the MOD for 2020.

In conclusion it is worthy of mention that reformed troops are exercised continuously with different forms of training and testing being used. This includes not only increased number of ordinary military exercises but also so called sudden checks of combat readiness, military competitions like 'tank biathlon' or 'aviadarts', multinational exercises and so on. This makes the reformed Russian army much more capable. It was noted even by the US Defense Secretary C.Hagel in his speech to the

Association of the United States Army (AUSA) in 15th October 2014 when he said that ‘we also must deal with a revisionist Russia – with its modern and capable army – on NATO’s doorstep’.

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