



Crimean Army Corps Conducts Amphibious Landing and Defense Exercise

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian 126th Coastal Defense Brigade and the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade are part of the 22nd Army Corps, which is the ground forces command of the Black Sea Fleet. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* reports, these units recently conducted a force-on-force exercise in the Opuk training area in the southeast of the Crimean Peninsula.

The exercise was a “ramps-on-beach” exercise where the naval infantry’s tanks, artillery and personnel carriers stayed dry. The “over-the horizon” amphibious capability is lacking until the naval infantry receive more of the BMP-3F infantry fighting vehicles, which are especially designed for operations at sea. They have improved seaworthiness and buoyancy and can fire accurately at Beaufort Sea force 2 and function up to force 3. Reportedly, they can endure sustained amphibious operations for up to seven hours.

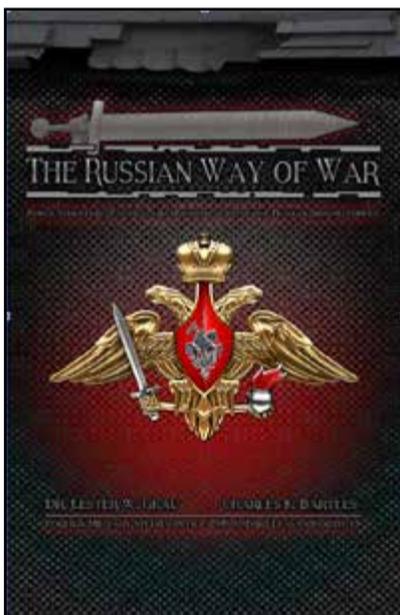
Of particular interest was the Russian use of tanks in the reconnaissance-strike system. The reconnaissance-strike system is a Russian tactical innovation to combine reconnaissance, command and control and artillery together in order to identify and destroy targets accurately in near-real time. Soviet/Russian tanks have long had a “support by indirect fire” role and the inclusion of accurate high-angle tank fire in the reconnaissance-strike system has been used in Syria. It has now spread to the training grounds of the Crimea and unmanned aerial vehicles provided much of the targeting data. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“In order to conduct aerial reconnaissance and generate targeting data, subunits used UAVs, including Takhions and Orlans. During the seaborne landing, Eleron UAVs flew from one of the large landing ships.”



BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicle.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin Blog, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2017-Demonstration-p1/i-3SKF64Q>, CC 4.0.



THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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Continued: Crimean Army Corps Conducts Amphibious Landing and Defense Exercise

Source: Pavel Zavolokin, “В бой идут «чёрные береты» (“Black Berets” go into battle),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 October 2018. <http://redstar.ru/plechom-k-plechu-drug-protiv-druga/>

The 12-day exercise was divided into four main phases with two to six events in each of them. One of the most dynamic and intensive events involved landing naval infantry subunits from large amphibious landing ships on an unfortified coastline.

In order to secure a beachhead before the large amphibious landing ships approached the shore, “black berets” of the naval infantry, with the support of attack helicopters, conducted a tactical air assault from Mi-8AMTSh helicopters and also landed attack and engineer-sapper groups from high-speed motor boats. Fighting successfully to secure a beachhead and clearing passages through minefields, the lead naval infantry subunits ensured that the ships were able to approach the shoreline and disembark the brigade’s main forces from the landing ships’ twin decks directly onto dry land.

Building on their success, the naval infantry cleared the beachhead with a rapid attack and moved inland from the coast. Driving the notional enemy back from his forward positions, the advancing naval infantry destroyed enemy reserves and established a defensive line and begin digging in. During the live-fire phase, individual small arms, BTR-82A ordnance, grenade-launcher teams, and 2S9 self-propelled howitzer Nona-S crews engaged targets. Lieutenant-Colonel Roman Verikzhinkov, deputy chief of the Black Sea Fleet Army Corps Operations Section, stated that this is a force-on-force exercise. While the naval infantry is seeking to capture a section of coastline following successful sea and air landings, the coastal defense brigade soldiers are defending that coast against an enemy invasion.

The successful side will be the one that employs tactics that the “adversary” least expects, makes rational use of available forces and resources, and responds correctly and promptly to unexpected exercise events. The Black Sea Fleet Army Corps headquarters assesses its subunit commanders’ decisions daily, while a modeling group is using mathematical calculations to assess the effectiveness of the opposing sides’ actions.

The exercise included experiences from modern-day combat in Syria. Extensive use was made of [artillery] reconnaissance-fire systems, tank reconnaissance-fire systems, mobile electronic warfare groups, fortifications incorporating ancient “Syrian ramparts,” and vertical envelopment and outflanking notional enemy’s forces. In order to create a situation that was as close as possible to actual conditions and effectively fulfill prescribed missions, subunits from a separate reconnaissance brigade and a CBR reconnaissance regiment, command and control and communications battalions, and artillery regiment subunits were mobilized for the exercise.

Lieutenant-Colonel Verikzhinkov stated “At least six [artillery] reconnaissance-fire complexes, including two tank reconnaissance fire complexes have been in operation. The use of the latter is more than justified -- they are armored systems with good firepower that are hard to destroy. Further, this makes it possible to rehearse effectively those issues relating to tank fire over large distances from concealed positions.”

In order to conduct aerial reconnaissance and generate targeting data, subunits used UAVs, including Takhions and Orlans. During the seaborne landing, Eleron UAVs flew from one of the large landing ships. The drones relayed reconnaissance information, even when the command points were packed up and moving with the subunits. While the Coastal Defense brigade’s subunits were on the move their drones remained in the air, collecting information in automatic mode...

The drones were confronted by electronic warfare subunits, which were attempting to disrupt or intercept C&C channels on the Takhions hovering over the training ground. The electronic warfare experts had to operate with precision in order to avoid “wrecking” valuable equipment on the ground. Meanwhile they were striving to suppress the notional enemy’s communications channels as completely as possible. As the experience of operations in Syria suggests, a suppressed enemy communications network provides a tangible contribution to the success of an entire operation.

Communications personnel at Opuk also came under attack -- this time from saboteurs. As the actions of the sabotage and reconnaissance groups demonstrated, communications equipment sites are vulnerable, threatening subunits with the loss of several communications channels at once. New mobile command and control and communications devices, enabling a commander to control a subunit on the move without using command-staff vehicles or deploying communications sites, are currently being trialed in subunits. Such systems make it possible to safeguard data-transmission channels at the tactical level, and in the very near future it is expected that this system will be further developed at a higher level of command and control.

The force-on-force exercise resulted in the fulfillment of tasks to repulse actions by an “enemy” who had landed on the coast and to defend the coastline. Which of the brigades will prove victorious in the end will be shown by an upcoming detailed analysis of operations during each stages of the maneuvers. As yet it can only be said that all the planned tasks for the training event were achieved and the subunit commanders and personnel acquired essential training in conducting modern combat.