



## Russia Formed 18th Motorized Rifle Division in Kaliningrad

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpted article from the 3 February 2021 edition of *Izvestiya*, a large-circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper, describes the creation of Russia's newest motorized rifle division—the 18th Motorized Rifle Division (MRD). The 18th MRD is located in the enclave of Kaliningrad and is subordinate to the Baltic Fleet via the 11th Army Corps, whose headquarters are also located in Kaliningrad. The *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation* website describes the initial ceremony for the standing up of the 18th MRD. Colonel General Andrei Kartapolov, Deputy Minister of Defense and Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate, appeared to be the presiding official in attendance. The article also provides a brief history of 18th MRD.

It is important to note that the creation of this new division does not mean that the Russia has increased its combat power in Kaliningrad by one motorized rifle division. Instead, this division will mostly consist of units that were already in existence before its creation. As the above-mentioned articles point out, the new division will be built around the former 79th Motorized Rifle Brigade. The 7th Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment, 11th Separate Tank Regiment, 244th Artillery Brigade (likely to be disbanded and reflagged as a regiment), and the 22nd Air Defense Regiment will also likely be subordinated to the 18th MRD. If these units are adopted, the 18th MRD will have one fewer motorized rifle regiments than the optimal MRD configuration and most other MRDs of the Russian Ground Forces (3 motorized rifle regiment/1 tank regiment).

The accompanying excerpted article from the 10 March 2021 edition of *Izvestiya* describes the newly formed 20th Reconnaissance Battalion. This battalion, also part of the 18th MRD, may be new, but it is unlikely that it was created from scratch. Most of the 20th Reconnaissance Battalion is likely just a reflagged version of the reconnaissance battalion that was subordinated to the 79th Motorized Rifle Brigade, albeit, as the article describes, with an added long-range reconnaissance capability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



*Presentation of colors ceremony for the 18th Motorized Rifle Division.*

Source: Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12347032@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12347032@egNews), Attribution: CC BY 4.0

***“Poland borders our enclave [Kaliningrad] in the south and Lithuania in the north - NATO multinational battalions perform duty in these states on rotation. Obviously, as a result, a portion of the Russian troops will be oriented on Poland and the other portion - on Lithuania. If necessary, they [Russian forces] will be able to effectively react to a change of the situation...”***



## Continued: Russia Formed 18th Motorized Rifle Division in Kaliningrad

**Source:** Roman Krezul, Alexey Ramm, and Anton Lavrov, Калининград усиливает сухопутную группировку (Kaliningrad Is Reinforcing Its Ground Grouping), *Izvestiya Online* (Pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 3 February 2021. <https://iz.ru/1119684/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm-anton-lavrov/dobavili-sushi-kaliningrad-usilivaet-sukhoputnuiu-gruppirovku>

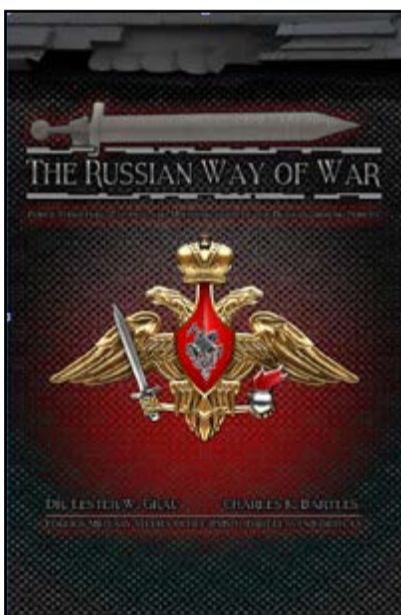
*The Ministry of Defense will strengthen the ground component of the defense of Kaliningrad Oblast. In particular, the reorganization of 79th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade has begun... This unit together with a number of others will become part of the composition of the [18th] Motorized Rifle Division, to which they will assign the enclave's defense. In the experts' opinion, the revamped grouping will be able to effectively cover Kaliningrad Oblast from various axes... The motorized rifle division on the territory of Kaliningrad Oblast will be formed this year, sources in the Military Department reported. Its units and subunits will participate in the "Zapad-2021" Strategic Exercises, which will occur in September...*

*79th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade - is the successor of 18th Guards Rifle Division, one of the most celebrated formations of the times of the Great Patriotic War. It was initially formed in 1939 under number 133. It participated in combat operations from July 1941 and held the defense on the Dnepr and in Smolensk and Kalinin (currently Tver) oblasts. The formation became one of the first to receive the status of Guards for the personnel's heroism in March 1942 and the standard number '18'. In the concluding phase of the war, the division assaulted Königsberg and Pillau and conducted engagements on the Vistula (Baltiysk) Spit. At the end of 1945, it was transformed into 30th Guards Mechanized Division, in 1957 - to 30th Guards Motorized Rifle, and in 1964 - to 18th Guards Motorized Rifle. It became 79th Separate Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade in 2001.*

*"11th Army was in the region until the beginning of the 1990s, but it was reduced later," Military Historian Dmitriy Boltenkov told *Izvestiya*. "11th Army Corps, which consists of a motorized rifle brigade and regiment and also an artillery brigade and a tank regiment, has been covering Kaliningrad Oblast in recent years. Judging by everything, they have decided to reorganize the grouping now. Poland borders our enclave [Kaliningrad] in the south and Lithuania in the north - NATO multinational battalions perform duty in these states on rotation. Obviously, as a result, a portion of the Russian troops will be oriented on Poland and the other portion - on Lithuania. If necessary, they [Russian forces] will be able to effectively react to a change of the situation..."*

*Baltic Fleet Commander Aleksandr Nosatov announced the impending formation of a full-fledged motorized rifle division in Kaliningrad Oblast in December of last year. They will include motorized rifle, tank, and artillery regiments in it. In the Admiral's words, the new formation will be part of 11th Army Corps that defends the enclave. Russian military personnel cite the buildup of the NATO multinational strike groups near the Oblast's borders as the reason for the reinforcement of the ground grouping. Among them are one tank and several battalion-tactical teams. The modernization and reinforcement of the Russian grouping in the enclave has already been continuing for several years. At the beginning of 2018, they redeployed "Iskander-M" operational-tactical missile complexes to the Oblast. According to Ministry of Defense information, Baltic Fleet 11th Armed Corps 152nd Missile Brigade was reequipped with them.*

*At the beginning of 2019, a report appeared about the creation of the 11th Tank Regiment that is deployed in Kaliningrad Oblast. The next year Defense Department spokesmen reported about the arrival in it of three dozen modernized T-72B3M tanks with significantly improved defense from shaped-charge munitions and a new fire control system. The 11th Army Corps artillery brigade received "Smerch" long-range 300mm multiple launch rocket systems (MLRSs) to replace the "Grad" 122mm MLRSs. This has permitted the increase of the formation's target destruction range and the firepower of a salvo...*



### 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: 18th Motorized Rifle Division Formed in Kaliningrad

**Source:** Замминистра обороны РФ генерал-полковник Андрей Картаполов вручил историческое знамя мотострелковой дивизии армейского корпуса БФ (Deputy Defense Minister of the Russian Federation Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov Presented the Historical Banner of the [18th] Motorized Rifle Division to the Baltic Fleet's Army Corps), *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation Online*, 3 March 2021. [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12347032@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12347032@egNews)

*On March 2, Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation - Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Colonel General Andrei Kartapolov, presented the historical banner of the 18th Motorized Rifle Division to the commander of the 11th Army Corps, Major General Andrei Ruzinsky during a visit to the Baltic Fleet and its subordinate units.*

*The division was first formed in the fall of 1939 and was one of the most famous formations of the Great Patriotic War. She participated in hostilities since July 1941, held the defenses on the Dnieper, in the Smolensk and other regions. For the heroism of the personnel, the unit was one of the first in March 1942 to receive the status of the Guards and the number "18".*

*At the final stage of World War II, the division stormed Königsberg and Pillau, fought on the Baltic Spit. At the end of 1945, it was transformed into the 30th Guards Mechanized Division, in 1957 - into the 30th Guards Motorized Rifle Division, in 1964 - into the 18th Guards Motorized Rifle Division. In 2001, it became the 79th separate guards motorized rifle brigade...*

**Source:** Anton Lavrov and Alexey Ramm "В тылу сражений: Калининград защитят сверхдальние (In the Rear of Battles: Extra-Long-Range Reconnaissance Personnel Will Defend Kaliningrad)," *Izvestiya Online* (Pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 10 March 2021. <https://iz.ru/1134600/anton-lavrov-aleksei-ramm/v-tylu-srazhenii-kaliningrad-zashchitiat-sverkhdalnie-razvedchiki>

*The ground troop grouping in Kaliningrad Oblast has been reinforced with extra-long-range reconnaissance personnel. The new company will be part of 18th Motorized Rifle Division, which is being formed in the enclave right now. It soldiers can collect information deep in the enemy rear, while penetrating there in helicopters and while using parachutes. If necessary, they will easily detect especially important targets and will guide aircraft, artillery, or cruise missiles to them, the experts pointed out...The extra-long-range reconnaissance company is already at the formation stage and the recruitment of personnel is occurring, Izvestiya's sources in the Military Department reported. The subunit will be subordinate to 18th Motorized Rifle Division's newly formed 20th Reconnaissance Battalion...*

*The scouts' "primary armament" - is special equipment, which permits them to pinpoint even camouflaged targets. The "Strelets" Reconnaissance, Command and Control, And Communications Complex (KRUS) helps to guide aircraft and artillery strikes and the main thing - cruise missiles, including sea-launched "Kalibr", coastal "Bastion", and ground-based "Iskander" cruise missiles. Navigation equipment provides the capability to commanders to determine the location of their subunits and also the enemy's men and equipment with an accuracy of several centimeters. A special tablet, which the officer can use to issue orders, is part of the set.*

*"These subunits are designated for operations in the enemy's operational-strategic rear," Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy told Izvestiya. "Their primary mission in the event of the initiation of combat operations - are target designations for long-range and precision-guided weapons. The scouts are equipped with the appropriate technical systems, including satellite communications systems, long-range radio communications, the needed instruments for target designation both in the form of the transmission of the target's coordinates and also using a laser. All of this has been integrated into the integrated reconnaissance-information system and it, in its turn, becomes an element of the precision-guided weapons reconnaissance-strike loops. In the process, any Armed Forces weapons can be employed as a strike element of that loop: the missiles of ships and submarines, air-launched strike weapons, and so forth. The reconnaissance teams in the enemy rear can expose targets, which are not seen from satellites or unmanned aerial vehicles, the expert noted.*

*"The enemy employs camouflage measures and conceals the most important elements of the combat formation and the command and control systems," Viktor Murakhovskiy explained. "But the verification of those targets is important in reconnaissance. It is no secret that decoy targets are frequently employed. Let's say, terrorist formations have frequently attempted to camouflage themselves as medical facilities and they have drawn the appropriate symbols on buildings and motor vehicles. But a commander needs to have data from several sources to make a decision on the conduct of a strike. The deep reconnaissance company will become one of these sources..."*