



The impact of COVID-19 on the Russian armed forces and the military industry

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Shoigu interview for his 65th birthday on May 21:

‘The Russian armed forces must be mobile, modern and effective.’

Мобильная, современная, эффективная

→ Assessing the strong and weak signals for these three priorities in the context of Covid-19 and beyond.



MOBILE



1/ 'Vectors' of military strategy

'Active defence'

- Mobile and fast
- 'Preemptive neutralisation of threats'
- Linked to the initial period of war and war termination strategy

'Strategy of limited action'

- Mobile and sufficient
- Out-of-area operations

Need for increased C2, readiness and force mobility

- Mobile and ready
- Importance of military logistics

Link with **new military doctrine 2020?**

2/ Command and Control, and beyond

Lessons learned from Syria

National Defence Control Centre (NDCC)

Centralised standard procedures across
C3 systems:

- Tactical Joint Battle Command system
- Joint Battlefield information system



3/ Logistics, readiness and prepositioning of force

Linked to 'preemptive neutralisation of threats'

Increased focus on **force mobility and deployability**

Military logistics and pre-storage of equipment

- Pushing potential tension and fighting away from the Russian territory
- Reflected in procurement choices

MODERN



إسقاط طائرة استطلاع روسية إثر استهدافها بالمضادات الأرضية في ريف اللاذقية

@Ahrar_Lens

What does 'modern' mean?

'New does not always mean modern'

Modernisation has two meanings:

- 1/ **Procuring new systems** (but not necessarily modern ones)
- 2/ **MRO**: upgrading proven Soviet-era platforms to make them (look) 'modern'



'That's modern!'

1/ Impact of Covid-19 on OPK and GOZ

OPK - military-industrial complex

GOZ - state defence orders

Putin: 'unconditional fulfillment of the state defense order'

OPK adaptations:

- Covid-19 specific output
- Case of UPZ ventilators
- In line with the **'conversion' of the military industry**



2/ Trends in the OPK

‘Cheap, well and in time’

Long-term issues have been reinforced by Covid-19

Structural financial problems

- Absence of liquidity
- Financial recovery

Stocks and production surge

Impact of sanctions

- Russia’s ‘Achilles’ Heels’: machine-building tools, microelectronics, special steels and metallurgic products
 - Replacing a dependency with another one (Asian markets)
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3/ 'Conversion' of the OPK

Conversion = **civilianisation + diversification of OPK production**

Linked with import substitution programmes and investment programmes of the energy sector

Caveats and limitations:

- Initial capital investment
- Market conditions

EFFECTIVE



1/ Impact of Covid-19 on the armed forces

Highly centralised, top-down response

Operational HQ

Readiness checks

Force organisation

- CBRN troops
- Intelligence posts

Medical centres

Drafting issues



'Anybody ordered a car wash?'



2/ Military science & technology

‘Ambiguous asymmetry’ of Russia’s
military S&T

‘Good enough’ logic

Seeking asymmetric advantages

Example of **ERA Military
Innovation Technopolis**

‘Degraded science’



3/ Tactical adaptations

// Artillery units revolution

2017 reform of the artillery units

Reconnaissance-strike and reconnaissance-fire (RUK) multi-contour systems in combined arms manoeuvres

Less carpeting, more PGMs

Revival of the heavy self-propelled artillery systems

ISTAR revolution with UAVs



2S-7 Pion

3/ Tactical adaptations

// **Electronic Warfare**

- 2008 wake-up call
- Bylina automated C2 system
- Increasing the tactical-operational capabilities of EW troops
- Specialised EW research and production firms KRET and Sovzvezdie
- Anti-UAV warfare

// **A2/AD capabilities**

- 4D, multi-layered, moving glass domes...not bubbles
 - Russian response to perceived asymmetry in air power with the West
 - Combination of coastal and air defence systems with stand-off strike capability
 - Beware of '*angry red circles*'
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3/ Tactical adaptations

// **Autonomous systems**

2008 wake-up call and Syrian game-changer

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

- ISTAR missions
- Strike drone programme - S-70 Okhotnik and Altius
- Troops integration at the tactical level

Unmanned Ground Vehicles

- Remote-controlled - Uran-6 deminer
- UCGVs - Uran-9, Neherta

Underwater Unmanned Vehicles



Orlan-10



S-70 Okhotnik strike drone



Uran-6 demining UGV

3/ Tactical adaptations

// **Doomsday weapons, Death Star systems & other Wunderwaffe**

The message IS the weapon

How threatening are these systems to the West under the current Russian procurement cycle?

Yu-71 **Avangard** (SS-X-31) hypersonic boost-glide system

Kh-47M2 **Kinzhal** air-launched missile

9M730 **Burevestnik** (SSC-X-9 Skyfall) nuclear-powered subsonic cruise missile



Avangard



Kinzhal



Burevestnik

CONCLUSION

What are we going to see next?

- More of the same, but better
- ‘Soviet on steroids’
- Lessons learned from Syria, Ukraine, and now Covid-19
- More mobile, modern and effective...but just ‘good enough’

What should the West do?

- Maintain the military and technological edge over Russia
- Avoid self-deterrence
- Prioritize defence spending in breakthrough military technology and procurement where the West has a clear technological edge
- Change the cost-benefit calculus of the Kremlin to operate in the grey zone

Valeriy Gerasimov smiling

FOOTAGE NOT FOUND