



China's New Type Combat Forces: Tomorrow's Ground Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been pushing to develop "new-type combat forces," which it says are important forces to win future wars. While the country's military has come a long way in the development and training of its combat forces, China has recognized shortfalls and is moving to rectify things.

Over the past 70 years, PLA ground forces have undergone a number of developmental stages, from being mule and horse-mounted to motorized, mechanized, and informationized. The PLA has gone from being a manpower-intensive military service, with infantry as the primary body to being a technology-intensive military service, with infantry forces being trimmed back. It has also transitioned from mechanization to informatization. Now, the PLA has its sights set on becoming "intelligentized," with an intensified focus on better-trained soldiers. "New-type combat forces" as they are being referred to, have been a growing focus of Chinese media reports, such as the accompanying article excerpts published in *China Daily* and *Beijing Jingshen – Qian Xian*.

China Daily referred to the PLA Strategic Support Force, which was founded on 31 December 2015, as being a "new type of combat force." The same article also refers to "new type of informationized combat forces" in the PLA Navy. With the rapid modernization of China's military, "new type of combat forces" are likely becoming the new normal throughout all branches of service.

With this new normal, as *Beijing Jingshen - Qian Xian* points out, new training methods need to be used to train combat forces. Some of the author's points include: New type combat forces are more information and technology intensive. They are deployed in critical missions and therefore "training should be conducted in the same way that the forces are employed on the battlefield." Personnel will likely be a higher caliber and more highly educated, capable, and trained in information and domains. They are also expected to be more versatile. This means that while soldiers are specialists in one area, they are expected to be "jacks of all trades." Finally, training methods need to be revamped to become more interactive and diverse. The author argues, "the new-type combat forces and the conventional combat forces should band together in combined training around their concrete combat missions, thus realizing the grand fusion of all types of forces in the operational system."

End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)



Emblem of People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force.

Source: 漫漫冬 via Wikimedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Emblem_of_People%27s_Liberation_Army_Strategic_Support_Force.png, Public Domain.

“The new-type combat forces are important forces in our [China’s] military for winning future wars, and represent the developmental trend of military technologies and warfighting patterns.”

Source: “China Daily: President Xi Reviews Armed Forces on National Day,” *PR Newswire*, 3 October 2019. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/china-daily-president-xi-reviews-armed-forces-on-national-day-300930646.html>

China Daily: President Xi Reviews Armed Forces on National Day

A formation of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) was reviewed. It marked the first attendance of PLASSF, a new type of combat force for safeguarding national security, in National Day parade. The PLASSF was established on December 31, 2015.

A maritime patrol aircraft echelon was reviewed on Tuesday in China's National Day military parade, marking the collective public debut of the new type of informationized combat forces of the People's Liberation Army Navy. The echelon consists of the KJ-500H and KJ-200 early warning aircraft, the Y-8 anti-submarine patrol aircraft and the y-8 technical reconnaissance aircraft.



Continued: China's New Type Combat Forces: Tomorrow's Ground Forces

Source: Zhao Ruibing, “新型作战力量训练须用“新”招 (New Methods should be Used to Train the New-Type Combat Forces),” *Beijing Jingshen - Qian Xian*, 17 October 2019. <http://www.bjqx.org.cn/qxweb/n429183c1096.aspx>

The new-type combat forces are important forces in our military for winning future wars and represent the developmental trend of military technologies and warfighting patterns.

... Training for the new-type combat forces is different from that for the conventional forces. ... In general, the new-type combat forces have the characteristics of being information-dominating and technology-intensive... the new-type combat forces will mostly be employed in the key areas to perform critical missions. So, training should be conducted in the same way the forces are employed on the battlefield, and should truly be oriented to and driven by actual operations, be conducted according to the use timing, organizational scale, action forms and methods, and battlefield environment of the new-type combat forces. ... Training methods and regularity should be studied around the building of individual capability, single-piece equipment capability, units combined capability, elements interaction capability, and systems integration capability.

... In addition to the good qualities of physical fitness, operational skills, and intelligent capacity, the new-type personnel should also have the following three types of crucial qualities. First, the quality of informatization.... Second, the quality of professional proficiency.... Third, the quality of versatility.

...the new forces are technology-intensive and include diverse specialties, and in particular, as the key posts have high requirements for the personnel's skills and require a long training cycle, it is necessary to concentrate the organization of training at a high level of precision and accuracy.

Forces should be grouped for training in the same way as in wartime.

To maximize their combat effectiveness, the new-type combat forces must be merged with other forces to shape an integrated entity. So the new-type combat forces and the conventional combat forces should band together in combined training around their concrete combat missions, thus realizing the grand fusion of all types of forces in the operational system.

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>

