



## Assessing Operation Tsentr

**OE Watch Commentary:** “Tsentr-2019” was the Central Military District’s turn to host Russia’s annual autumn strategic-operational exercise. It preceded the national strategic nuclear exercise (Grom-19) and, although scripted, provided the opportunity to move, coordinate and support a nation-wide effort in a specific region. Thus, it was a major test of communications, logistics, transport and military planning. The annual national exercise is also becoming a test of the ability of other Federal Agencies to work with the Ministry of Defense and local commanders for territorial and civil defense. What was unique was the representation of countries in the counter-terrorism exercise: Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The intended message is that Central Asia and its immediate neighbors can deal with their own regional security problems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***““Tsentr-2019” ... occurred in the Central Military District from 16 through 21 September in accordance with the Armed Forces Training Plan.... Personnel of the Central Military District, Southern Military District’s Caspian Flotilla, and also a portion of the Eastern Military District forces, the Airborne Troops, and Long Range and Military Transport Aviation were involved in the maneuvers. More than 128,000 servicemen, over 21,000 weapons and military vehicles and equipment, 15 combat ships, and 34 support vessels participated.”***

**Source:** Aleksandr Tikhonov: “‘Tsentr-2019’: The exercise’s goals were achieved. The troops demonstrated high skill and revealed the capability to operate unconventionally in a difficult situation,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 November 2019. [redstar.ru/tsentr-2019-tseli-ucheniya-dostignuty/](http://redstar.ru/tsentr-2019-tseli-ucheniya-dostignuty/)

### ***‘Tsentr-2019’: The Exercise’s Goals were achieved***

Russian Defense Minister General of the Army Sergey Shoygu summed up the results of the “Tsentr-2019” Strategic Command-Staff Exercise at the RF National Defense Command and Control Center. New techniques of the troops actions were developed, an experiment of a new type of Airborne Troops formation was conducted, and coordination among the Russian Federation’s various departments along with the forces and command and control agencies of the contingents of the armed forces of the countries, which participated in the exercise, were organized during the course of the exercise.... Tactical activity was conducted at eight Russian ranges, four ranges of Kazakhstan, two – of Tajikistan, and one range in Kyrgyzstan.

Strategic command-staff exercises are conducted annually in each military district in turn. The very designations of the previous exercises attest to the location and time of their conduct: “Kavkaz-2016”, “Zapad-2017”, and “Vostok-2018”. Those exercises were also large-scale events. However, there are quite a few differences when comparing these exercises to “Tsentr-2019”, since quite a bit was being done either for the first time or for the first time since Soviet times.

General Shoygu stated “The distinctive feature of the exercise consisted of the creation of a coalition counterterrorist troop grouping, which represents Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan”.... The fact that these countries considered it possible and necessary to send their military contingents to participate in a strategic exercise that is being conducted in the Russian Federation attests to their potential readiness to merge their military potentials with ours to counter those threats, which exist and can increase (or can appear) in the Central Asian Region. There is a common goal to preserve stability in Central Asia and the capability to do this through joint efforts....

The massive deployment – in the initial phase – of aircraft and other combined formations – was one of the more distinctive feature of this exercise. “In the initial phase, 282 aircraft were deployed, including from Western and Southern Military Districts, to operational airfields at a distance of more than 1,500 kilometers... An aircraft grouping, which numbered approximately 600 aircraft, including 15 aircraft and eight helicopters of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, was created”.

“Tsentr-2019’s” third key feature was the successful drop of a full-strength parachute regiment with more than 200 vehicles, weapons systems and special equipment. This was the first large-scale drop since the ... “Zapad-81” Exercise. “A total of 71 Il-76 aircraft simultaneously participated in the large-scale operation”....

Five federal agencies... – a total of more than 3,000 men and approximately 400 pieces of equipment – participated in the exercise working on issues of the planning and accomplishment of joint operations of territorial and civil defense. Per General Shoygu, “This permitted us to increase the level of interdepartmental coordination and to assess the real capabilities of the federal agencies during work in wartime conditions,”.... Additionally, more than 120 military attachés from 75 countries observed the exercise’s active phase at Donguz Range.