



Summing Up Russian Military Achievements in 2019

OE Watch Commentary: In summarizing the military's accomplishments in 2019, Russia's primary military newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, published a detailed interview with First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov. As expected, most of his comments merely expressed praise for their achievements, yet there were a handful of observations which merit closer examination. After assuring readers that 2019 saw "the delivery of more than 6,500 new and modernized weapons to the troops," Tsalaikov asserts that "the first missile regiment, which is armed with the 'Avangard' missile complex with the hypersonic gliding winged warhead, went on alert last Friday [20 December 2019]. The deployment of the 'Peresvet' laser mounts has been completed." Given that the two weapon systems were only first described by President Putin during a speech in February 2018, these are impressive accomplishments, if true.

Later in the interview, Tsalikov takes issue with various global ratings, where the Russian military is not considered the strongest, asserting, "we totally sincerely believe that our Army is first and the best in the world." As proof of this claim, Tsalikov points to the annual results of the "International Army Games," where, over the past five years, Russia has won "the overwhelming majority of competitions." He goes on to suggest that it is erroneous to measure the strength of a military "exclusively using budget appropriations," insisting that "those who have the greater skill, mastery, and desire to work for the benefit of their cause are victorious."



First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov.
Source: mil.ru, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tsalikov_HR-gr.jpg, CCA 4.0

After describing the many improvements with military housing, medical care, and logistics, Tsalikov concludes the interview by describing how the military is defending against information attacks. He asserts that the Russian military has "adhered to honest and open work," though fails to mention that data regarding casualties is now considered classified. Stressing the defensive nature of Russia's military doctrine, he assures readers that if the military is attacked, it "will not remain without an adequate response." He goes on to enlist the support of "Russian mass media to be as a minimum allies, if not 'soldiers' in this information warfare." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"... We totally sincerely believe that our Army is first and the best in the world."

Source: Aleksandr Aleksandrov, "Прорывные технологии на всех направлениях (Breakthrough Technologies in All Directions)," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 December 2019. <http://redstar.ru/proryvnye-tehnologii-na-vseh-napravleniyah/>

...First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov discussed how the Armed Forces will best remember the outgoing year and how they managed to achieve the intended plans....

[Aleksandrov] While assessing the work that has been done, which key results did you manage to achieve in the outgoing year? Which events became significant for the Armed Forces?

[Tsalikov] During this year, the Ministry of Defense has done an enormous amount of work, which received the Supreme Commander-in-Chief's high rating and is being confirmed by Russian society's level of trust, which we are observing today....All the events, which were outlined by the 2019 Action Plan and the State Defense Order, were completely accomplished, as the Defense Minister mentioned in his briefing at the Final Collegium. The highest indicators of weapons and equipment deliveries in the last four years were achieved. We are talking about the delivery of more than 6,500 new and modernized weapons to the troops, which permitted us to bring the percentage of state-of-the-art models to 68.2 percent.... The highest percentage of state-of-the-art weapons totals 82 percent in the Nuclear Triad. The first missile regiment, which is armed with the "Avangard" missile complex with the hypersonic gliding winged warhead, went on alert last Friday. The deployment of the "Peresvet" laser mounts has been completed....

[Aleksandrov] How did you manage to emerge at those rates of military force structure? Does this give us the right to consider [our Army] to be one of the world's leading armies, which the leading positions in the international ratings are confirming today?

[Tsalikov] I will say more, many of these ratings are inclined to understate Russia's positions. Why should we trust foreign ratings, while naively believing that we have the second army and not the first? In fact, world championships among armies are not conducted.... For example, we totally sincerely believe that our Army is first and the best in the world. For those people, who claim this status, we conduct the International Army Games (ArMI), where the leading countries' armies compete in honest and peaceful competition. As it was this year when a record number of participants – 39 states from all the world's regions – participated in ArMI....

We have the capabilities, which have been set forth in the budget. But it would be absolutely incorrect to assess the results of this work exclusively using budget appropriations. Those who have the greater skill, mastery, and desire to work for the benefit of their cause are victorious in any sphere....

[Aleksandrov] This is actually impressive, and we are seeing this. In recent years, the Ministry of Defense has taken a strict course to open, objective, and accessible public information about the life and activity of the Armed Forces to the maximum possible extent. What is the transparency policy and what kind of results has it yielded?

[Tsalikov] Based upon the results of recent public opinion polls, approximately 90 percent of the citizens approve and support the activities of the Armed Forces.... We have prioritized transparency not for publicity or PR....

...We need to acknowledge that the information pressure, which is directed at discrediting all that enormous work, which is being conducted to strengthen the Russian Army, has been increasing in recent years.... We have adhered to honest and open work. But those people, who will use the dirty methods of information warfare against us should know that their operations will not remain without an adequate response. And we would like for the representatives of the media industry and the Russian mass media to be as a minimum allies if not "soldiers" in this information warfare. In the current state, far from everyone likes the Russian Armed Forces. And we are not striving for that. However, there are schemes and plans for discrediting the Russian Army, which we will never permit. And we need to combat this only through transparency.