



Russia: Tanks A Lot

OE Watch Commentary: Five years ago, the Russian military displayed its new, 4th generation T-14 Armata tank during the annual Victory Day Parade. At the time, both domestic and foreign military observers suggested that this fundamentally new tank, of which 2,000 were planned to be built, could change the armored correlation of forces in Russia's favor. Production delays and design problems, however, have reduced the production target to a modest 130 tanks, resulting in a more modest reassessment of Russia's armored forces. Still, as the brief excerpt from *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye* argues, "the tank was and remains the embodiment of the military power of Russia."

The author begins his tank analysis by claiming that the chief concern of the West during the Cold War was "the avalanche of Soviet tanks rushing to the English Channel," where the USSR had as many tanks "as NATO and China combined." He then goes on to describe how post-Soviet Russia employed tanks in the various conflicts over the past 25 years (e.g. Chechnya, Georgia) and where the tank has played a major role in other regional (e.g. Iraq, Libya, Donbass, Yemen and Syria) wars.

The article describes the current disposition of Russian tank forces (unit, location, model of tank), claiming that the Russian armed forces have approximately 2000 tanks in combat units and at least as many in storage. The author points out that even though the "tank is constantly buried," it always comes back because "there is nothing comparable to the tank, in terms of combining firepower, mobility and security, and never will be." In addition, he claims that since "man lives on earth, not in the air or in the water... the land war will ultimately always be the main one."

The author concludes by pointing out that the "one significant drawback - the price" was the primary reason behind the decision to reduce the planned production of the Armata from 2,000 to 130. He goes on to explain that "the current number of [all models of] tanks in combat units of the Russian military cannot be considered acceptable, given the size of the country, the length and geographical vulnerability of its borders." He asserts that "Russia needs to have at least 5 thousand tanks in service and as many in storage." He suggests that these tanks should not be deployed against NATO (since "NATO troops are not ready for such battles"), but rather in the Central and Eastern Military Districts to defend against "PLA tankers." (Also see: "Sinking the Armata?" *OE Watch*, October 2019) **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...The tank was and remains the embodiment of the military power of Russia..."



T-14 Armata Tank at the 2015 Victory Day Parade, Moscow.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via VitalyKuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/9th-May-military-vehicles/i-R62n9MV/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



Continued: Russia: Tanks A Lot

Source: AAlexander Khranchikhin, “Преждевременный отказ от брони (Premature Cancellation of Armor),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 20 February 2020. http://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2020-02-20/1_1082_tanks.html

The tank was and remains the embodiment of the military power of Russia.... In the West during the years of the Cold War they were not afraid of anything like the avalanche of Soviet tanks rushing to the English Channel. In the USSR there really were a lot of tanks. About the same as NATO and China combined....

During the first Chechen war, the Russian Armed Forces lost more than 300 T-62, T-72 and T-80 tanks, but perhaps this number includes not only irretrievable losses, but also tanks to be recovered.... During the second Chechen war, all tanks were equipped with dynamic protection and were used under the guise of infantry units, so the losses decreased by an order of magnitude....

...In service with the 4th TD (Kantemirovskaya) as part of the ZVO (the location is Naro-Fominsk, Moscow Region), there are 188 T-80U and 41 T-72B3. There are no more T-80U tanks in combat units. On the basis of the 7th TBR TsVO (Chebarkul, Chelyabinsk region), the 90th TD was formed. It consists of at least 120 T-72B, which are supposed to be replaced by T-90. There are also two tank brigades: the 5th in the Eastern Military District (Ulan-Ude) and the 6th in the Western Military District (Dzerzhinsk, Nizhny Novgorod Region), 94 T-72B / B3 each.

...Paradoxically, it is the tank that is constantly buried, which does not happen to any other class of equipment. It is doubly paradoxical that they bury him because of allegedly too much vulnerability on the battlefield, no other charges are brought against the tank... If the tank is outdated due to vulnerability, then a land war can no longer be fought at all, which can hardly be discussed seriously. Still, man lives on earth, not in the air or in the water. Therefore, the land war will ultimately always be the main one... And there is nothing comparable to the tank, in terms of combining firepower, mobility and security, and never will be.

In all recent wars, losses in tanks turn out to be very large, an extremely striking example of this is the war in Libya (total losses of the parties - more than 200 tanks), Donbass (at least 250 tanks were destroyed in total), Yemen (about the same) and Syria (total loss of sides - at least 750 tanks). ...Therefore, tanks are not going anywhere, at least in the foreseeable future....

The Russian Armata is a major breakthrough in the development of armored vehicles in the entire post-war history.... True, it seems that the “Armata” has one significant drawback - the price. And that is why the tank is moving so slowly towards adoption.

...Moreover, the current number of tanks in combat units (approximately 2 thousand) cannot be considered acceptable, given the size of the country, the length and geographical vulnerability of its borders. Russia needs to have at least 5 thousand tanks in service and as many in storage....

Another circumstance is the endless funeral of the tank described above, exacerbated by another myth: large-scale tank battles will never happen again. Yes, indeed, they will never be between Russia and NATO. For the sole reason, NATO troops are not ready for such battles due to psychological reasons. But such battles with the Ukrainian army are already quite possible (they even already had a place). And - most importantly - they are quite possible with the PLA tankers....

Fangs of the Lone Wolf

Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley
with Lester Grau

Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

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