



## Return of the Russian Horse Cavalry

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has mountains and a long history of fighting in mountains. Serious mountain combat requires the ability to move, supply and stay in the mountains for extended periods of time. ATVs and helicopters cannot go everywhere and often armies with trained mountain troops have riding and pack horses, donkeys and mules. As the accompanying articles indicates, Russia is reconstituting mountain units in its ground forces and airborne and the horse is making a return to service. In particular, the article highlights the Russian Army's "Equestrian Marathon" competition, noting especially that the horsemen from the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School took top honors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

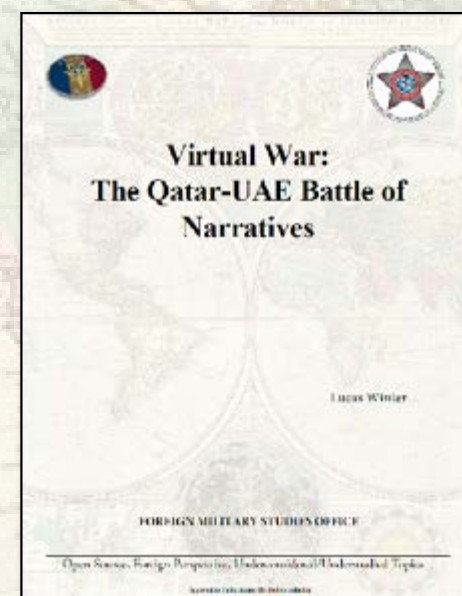
*“The Russian Federation Armed Forces Ground Troops mountain motorized rifle brigades’ pack horse transportation squads are successfully accomplishing combat training missions in the not-readily-accessible mountain-wooded areas.”*

## VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter

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For much of the past decade, Qatar and the UAE have been engaged in a battle of narratives. Their ongoing dispute dates to 2011 and is rooted in foreign policy and ideological disagreements. Following a hack of the Qatari News Agency in 2017, the nature of Qatari-Emirati competition shifted from being primarily the purview of government officials, spokespeople, journalists, analysts and authors, to one where coders, influencers, trolls and cybersecurity experts played a vital role. Since then, both countries have worked to increase their capabilities in the cyber and informational domains. Their relationship in these domains has evolved into one of strategic competition. This paper looks at how these dynamics may affect the regional operational environment, with a particular focus on the cyber and informational domains.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>



## Continued: Return of the Russian Horse Cavalry

**Source:** Taras Rudyk, "An Indispensable Assistant in the Mission", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, <http://redstar.ru/nezamenimye-pomoshhniki-v-dele/>, 7 July 2020.

### *An Indispensable Assistant in the Mission*

*The All-Army Phase of the "Equestrian Marathon" Competition, part of the 6th Army International Games, concluded at Kara-Khaak Range in the Republic of Tuva. The teams of the best cavalry subunits of the Southern and Central Military District mountain motorized rifle formations and of the Airborne Troops participated in the competitions. The squad of the cadets of Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School defended the "Winged Infantry's" honor at the competitions.*

*The best teams of all of the Armed Forces branches and types of troops compete during the course of the various competitions....The Tank Biathlon and the motorized riflemen's competitions on professionalism [are famous]. Why the "Equestrian Competition"? ....Why does the contemporary Russian Army need cavalry subunits? Who will fight on horses now? ....*

*Russia is an enormous country with 11 time zones and nearly all of the climatic zones from subtropical to arctic. Terrain relief also varies from high mountains to plains located below sea level. There is quite a bit of territory in the country, where horses will pass but vehicles cannot ....Mountainous terrain without roads exist in the Caucasus, Urals and Altay Mountains, Trans Baikal and Buryatia, as well as the Far East. Consequently, pack horse transportation platoons were created in the Russian Army's mountain motorized rifle brigades, designed to transport horse-mounted personnel and various equipment across difficult terrain,*

*Cavalry was eliminated in the Soviet Army in the 1950s, but the combat in Afghanistan and in the North Caucasus again led to the employment of horses during the course of these two counterterrorist operations. Horses transport weapons, ammunition, food, and many other things which a soldier would need to conduct combat in the mountains. A horse can transport an approximately 100-kilogram packed payload 30 kilometers during a day's march.*

*It would seem that military transport helicopters can deliver practically any such cargo by air. Perhaps, but not always since the weather may not permit this or ... an enemy can use a portable air defense missile or an antiaircraft gun to shoot down a helicopter. All-terrain vehicles will not replace horses in the mountains because they cannot travel on narrow mountain paths or across a river with a depth of up to two meters, while pack horses can. Further, ATVs create a great deal of noise and can be heard several kilometers away.*

*Two horse-mounted transport platoons participated in all of the "Equestrian Marathon" competitions. [The 55th Separate Motorized Rifle (Mountain) Brigade] was created in Kyzyl in 2014 and became part of the 41st Combined-Arms Army's Separate Motorized Rifle (Mountain) Brigade, [Central Military District]. It has some 100 horses. The general combat training of this platoon's personnel is practically no different from the training of the soldiers of the platoons of the formation's other companies and batteries. Its soldiers and sergeants conduct weapons and specialized tactical training, engineer, and CBR, physical fitness and military medical training. They also study other disciplines after which they are tested on their military knowledge and skills at graded drills and end-of training-year inspections.*

*Approximately 100 specialized tactical training drills are conducted with the personnel of this platoon during a five-month training cycle. Special attention is paid to the soldiers' ability to orient themselves on terrain using a topographic map and GPS navigation because there is nothing easier than getting lost in densely-wooded mountains. During their training with the horses, they travel approximately 2,000-3,000 kilometers and deliver approximately 220 tons of various cargo during a five-month training period. This platoon's participation in the annual Victory Day Parade on the city's central square and at various socially-significant holidays has become a welcome tradition in Kyzyl.*

*The second pack horse transportation platoon which participated in the "Equestrian Marathon" is from the [Southern Military District's (42nd Guards?) Separate Motorized Rifle (Mountain) Brigade] from Karachaevo-Cherkessia. There are 80 horses within the permanent and rotating herd of Mongol and Karachay breeds and also Russian Trotters. Incidentally not all breeds of horses are suited for military missions. But Mongol, Karachay, and the very hardy Tuvan are the most sought-after transport animals for mountainous-wooded terrain. The Karachay trotters even climbed Mount Elbrus (5,642 meters), although the acceptable elevation for the effective employment of horses is up to 3,000 meters.*

*There are also horses used in the academic training of the cadets of the Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School. There are more than 60 Khakassia trotters at the military Higher Educational Institution. They teach the future officers how to control them because the "Blue Berets" can accomplish combat missions on nearly inaccessible terrain where you need animal-drawn transport for the heavy weapons, ammunition, and necessary cargo.*

*There are horse-breeders, veterinarians, farriers, and harness makers in the motorized rifle mountain brigades' pack horse transportation platoon....*

*There are four phases in the competition: preliminary, the 130 kilometer equestrian marathon, the seven kilometer relay race and the close out. Ten-man squads and ten horses compose the team. Horses are drawn by lots. There are two fire groups in a squad: the squad leader, a communications specialist-riflemen, a machine gunner, an automatic grenade launcher gunner, and his assistant form one fire group. A Dragunov SVD-armed sniper leads the 2nd group armed with two assault rifles (AKMS), an RPK machine gun, an RPG-7V hand-held antitank grenade launcher....*

*Over the course of these 130 kilometers under pouring rain and furious squalls, they negotiated five sectors, in which they accomplished missions involving mountain river crossing (two meters deep and 50 meters wide), crossing mine fields, lassoing and packing remount horses, camping overnight, transporting a "wounded soldier" and ammunition and finishing mounted as a team.*

*The 3rd phase of the competition, the seven kilometer relay race,... involved tactical range firing; hand grenade throwing for distance and accuracy from a trench, in the open and on moving horseback; deployment from the travel formation to the pre-battle and battle formations and ... negotiating a smoke-covered 12-obstacle course. The first three kilometers were traveled on foot and four kilometers mounted on horses....*

*The Central Military District team led by Pack Horse Transportation Squad Leader Ruslan Banzalay took 1st place. The squad under the command of Ryazan Higher Airborne Command School Sergeant Vyacheslav Gorchakov (Airborne Troops) took 2nd place, and the southerners under the leadership of Artillery Reconnaissance Squad Leader Sergeant Robert Dzhadoyev (Southern Military District) took 3rd place....*