



Russian Aviation Increases Training

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* discusses how aviation training has increased for Russian pilots. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new Russian pilots got 30-50 hours of flight time over the course of their entire training program. Currently, new pilots are routinely getting around 200 hours, and a lucky few around 300 hours. Russia now uses Ansat-U helicopters and Yak-130s jets as training platforms. The accompanying excerpted interview of the Commander of Long-Range Aviation, Lieutenant General Sergey Kobylash, from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses how Russian long-range aviation training is improving, and about how Russian military aviation is increasing its international presence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Yak-130 combat training aircraft.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2013/i-sqPbsjX/0/cd9cd1aa/X2/MAKS2013part1-36-X2.jpg>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

“All in all, the training of the pilots amounts to over 200 flight hours, or even to 300 -- if you are lucky.”

“Long-range aviation keeps expanding the geography of its presence with every passing year. The aircraft crews are carrying out air patrolling flights in remote geographic areas, which include landing at airfields of foreign states. Over the past few years, flights have been performed with the landing of long-range aviation aircraft at airfields in Indonesia, Venezuela, and South Africa.”

Source: Vladimir Karnozov “Учебная авиация взяла новую высоту (Training Aviation Conquers New Heights),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* Online, 15 May 2020. http://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2020-05-15/1_1092_aviation.html

In a fleet with total strength of several hundred units, such significant increase in the serviceability -- from 58 to 90 percent -- cannot be attributed to the improvement of the situation at the aircraft repair enterprises alone. It must be also the wider involvement of aircraft building plants, with increasing volume and expanding range of work in post-sale support of aircraft in service. As well as the mass decommissioning of worn-out aircraft of past generations: Mi-2U, L-39S, L-410, An-26, and so on.

The past decade has been marked by the arrival of about 50 of the latest Ansat-U training helicopters and over 100 Yak-130 combat training aircraft; additional orders are expected...

Today, the three-tiered training system is still in place in flight schools, and the training takes five years. Few of the cadets, with The Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy (DOSAAF) experience, come with some flying time on the Yak-52 aircraft or Mi-2U helicopter. The flight schools employ the two-seater L-39C jet for the initial and basic training stages of future fighter pilots, and the twin-engine turboprop L-410UVP is used to train bomber (BA) and military-transport aviation (VTA) crews.

The first stage includes about 60 flight hours, the second one -- additional 80 hours (those who are assigned to the BA and VTA fly much less). Then, at the advanced (in-depth) training stage, they fly another 70 hours on the two- and single-seater versions of combat aircraft (the BA flies the Tu-134BL, VTA -- the An-26, and others). All in all, the training of the pilots amounts to over 200 flight hours, or even to 300 -- if you are lucky.

This corresponds to the figures of the late Soviet period and considerably exceeds the 1990's -- 2000's indicators. The lowest point, when the flying time of newly minted fighter pilots at the time of graduation was about 50 hours total (with a minimum norm of 30), was passed. By 2007, when this number increased to 165, the situation improved. Incidentally, in 2009, then Russian Air Force Commander in Chief Aleksandr Zelin announced the cost of pilots training. He said that the training of a front-line aircraft pilot costs \$3.4 million, and about \$8 million -- for a sniper-pilot.



Continued: Russian Aviation Increases Training



Ansat-U training helicopter.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2013/i-K9zGrnj/0/55b52f1d/X2/MAKS2013part3-50-X2.jpg>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



Lieutenant General Sergey Kobylash, Commander of Russian Long-Range Aviation Commander.

Source: Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Кобылаш,_Сергей_Иванович#/media:Сергей_Кобылаш,_2017.jpg, CC BY 4.0K9zGrnj/0/55b52f1d/X2/MAKS2013part3-50-X2.jpg, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Source: Alexander Pinchuk, “Стратегов воздушные горизонты (Aerial Horizons of Strategy),” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 15 May 2020. <http://redstar.ru/58945-2/>

Sergey Ivanovich, please tell us about the results of the winter training period. What events did the crews take part in? What missions were rehearsed? What kind of results have been achieved? How goes the plan of flight teams’ flying hours?

Formations and military units accomplished all scheduled combat training activities in the winter training period, and achieved good results in terms of the main indicators. Over 30 exercises and training sessions of various levels were conducted under my leadership and the leadership of formations’ and military units’ commanders. During the reporting period, over 350 flight shifts were performed with 7,000 hours of total flying time, and more than 700 practice bombings were conducted at various ranges...

Long-range aviation is steadily expanding the geography of its presence. Tell us which regions were covered during the accomplishment of air patrol missions? Were the assigned missions successfully accomplished?

Long-range aviation keeps expanding the geography of its presence with every passing year. The aircraft crews are carrying out air patrolling flights in remote geographic areas, which include landing at airfields of foreign states. Over the past few years, flights have been performed with the landing of long-range aviation aircraft at airfields in Indonesia, Venezuela, and South Africa. Also last year, a joint air patrol flight was carried out in the airspace above the waters of the Eastern China Sea for the first time by Russian and Chinese crews aboard Tu-95MS and Xian H-6K, respectively.

In the 2020 winter period, the crews of strategic missile carriers and long-range bombers carried out over 15 sorties on air patrols missions over the waters of Black, Barents, and Japanese seas, as well as the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific oceans. Over 70 percent of these sorties were performed with mid-air refueling. Such flights are a complex form of flight training, which requires the crew to be highly skilled. I will note that all long-range aviation pilots undergo appropriate training and are capable of performing assigned combat missions in any geographic area.