



MLRS is Becoming a Precision Weapon

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *RIA Novosti* features an interview with the director of the ‘Tekhmash’ company, Alexander Kochkin. According to Kochkin, multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) were once just seen as mass fire weapons, but now these systems may also be described as ‘precision weapons.’ Kochkin discusses that these weapons may still be used as mass fire weapons, but thanks to recent technological advances, they may also be equipped with precision guided munitions. In addition, the ranges of these systems are substantially increasing. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



2B17M combat vehicle of 9K51M Tornado-G MLRS.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/ARMY-2016-Demonstration/i-8H55xTq/0/7181035f/X3/Army2016demo-061-X3.jpg>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

“If initially MLRSs were developed to fire on large areas, today we see the development of these systems as precision weapons.”

Source: Ivan Surayev, “Александр Кочкин: РСЗО становятся высокоточным оружием (Alexander Kochkin: MLRS will Become a Precision Weapon),” *RIA Novosti* Online, 27 May 2020. <https://ria.ru/20200527/1572042951.html>

The Russian defense sector is continuing to adapt to operation under conditions of the coronavirus pandemic: workers are returning to the enterprises, renewing testing of advanced models of weaponry, and the designing of new systems has not ceased...The leading domestic enterprise, specializing in the development and assembly of multiple launch rockets systems, flamethrower systems, aviation missiles and munitions, the “Tekhmash” Science/Manufacturing Concern (managed by the “Rostekh” State Corporation’s “Tekhnodinamika” Holding Company), is no exception to this tendency. Acting Director Alexander Kochkin in an interview with RIA Novosti correspondent Ivan Surayev talked about the plans to transform multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) into a precision long-range weapon...

Recently, information appeared on the transfer to Russia’s Defense Ministry of “Tornado-G” and “Tornado-S” multiple launch rocket systems, and how much were the specifications of these MLRS improved?

Actually, new 122 mm caliber “Tornado-G” multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) have begun to arrive in the RF Armed Forces, and this is the furthest development of all of the well-known “Grad” systems, and the “Tornado-S” is – correspondingly, a development of the “Smerch” system. We were able to seriously improve the specifications by means of automating command-and-control and firing.

These machines are equipped with navigational systems, thanks to which they can open fire from unprepared positions, and, naturally, we increase their range of fire, and introduced highly efficient munitions into the combat load. For example, in the “Tornado-G” a new round is used, which, in power and area of destruction exceeds the old “Grad” munitions five-fold. The range of fire was increased two-fold, from 20 up to 40 km. This means for the “Tornado-S” the effective range of this MLRS is more than 100 km against 70 for the “Smerch.” In this I want to note that while increasing the range, we are preserving and even increasing the firepower of the munitions.

How do you plan to further develop the field of MLRS?

If initially MLRSs were developed to fire on large areas, today we see the development of these systems as precision weapons. Along with salvo fire, even now they can destroy targets with individual rounds – munitions are expensive, and missions can best be resolved by a single rocket-propelled round. Now we are developing new precision rounds for the MLRS, and several are already in the inventory of the RF Armed Force.

The systems entering service in operational units today have great upgrade potential. We begin with the fact that they have already served for several decades and are working on the development of new long-range munitions. We assigned the task of increasing the range of destruction of the “Tornado-S” by an additional several tens of kilometers.

Certainly, at such distances it is only useful to operate with guided missiles, because the dispersion of conventional rocket-propelled rounds at such long ranges with a small number of warheads is too large. For now, this involves self-funded development, but it goes without saying, we coordinate all of our work with the state purchaser so as to not expend funds needlessly. Today we are carrying out scientific-research projects on this topic, and there are already experimental models going through test firing, but it is still rather far to acceptance into the inventory. I think that after 5-7 years we will manufacture these long-range munitions – and to all appearances, their delivery will be envisaged in the new State Armaments Program.