



Russian Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and Navy Air Defense Systems Under Single C2 System

OE Watch Commentary: In the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya*, the Russian Defense Ministry discusses how its Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and Navy air defense systems were placed under a single command-and-control system during the recent Kavkaz-2020 Strategic Command Staff Exercises. The existing Russian system does not inherently have unified command and control, so this was seen as an evolutionary step.

The majority of Russia's long-range air defense capability resides in the Air and Missile Defense (PVO-PRO) Troops of the Aerospace Forces. Their primary focus is the area defense of the State borders, key administrative-political centers, critical infrastructure, essential economic assets, and military facilities and formations. The weapon systems (S-300, S-400, Pantsir, etc.) of the PVO-PRO Troops usually occupy stationary positions in peacetime to fulfil these duties. The Ground Force's Air Defense (PVO) Troops are primarily responsible for protecting Ground Forces' elements in assembly areas and on the march from a diverse group of threats ranging from small UAVs to ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads. Given these missions, most PVO Troops' systems are of the short-range variety. (Gibka-S, Strela-10, Tor, Tunguska, Osa-AKM) Since the PVO Troops accompany the formations that they defend, their equipment usually have suitable mobility characteristics to escort combat vehicles while on the march, and into battle. The Russian Navy also has significant air defense assets. Many Aerospace Forces and Ground Force air defense systems have ship mounted naval variants (S-300F, S-400F, Pantsir-M, 3K95 Kinzhal [Tor], 3S90M Buk, etc.). In addition, the Navy's Coastal Defense Troops also operate S-300, S-400, and Pantsir systems to defend naval bases, and certain littoral regions.

As the article points out, it has been a "long-standing dream" to integrate these. While not revealing details, the article implies that progress was made toward this goal during the exercise. The article also took note that in historical terms, after the system of airspace control was disrupted with the demise of the Soviet Union, air defense responsibilities shifted and various individual services were blamed for failures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



S400 on Red Square.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/VictoryDayParade2013/i-SbbSmsq/0/bc05ca28/X2/Parade2013_38-X2.jpg, CC BY 4.0

“The servicemen’s long-standing dream is to integrate the entire air situation... With such a system in place, no one will be shifting responsibility for the situation, no one will be able to say that the PVO of the Ground Troops or the Navy didn’t do its job, and so on...”



Continued: Russian Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and Navy Air Defense Systems Under Single C2 System

Source: Anton Lavrov and Artem Kretsul, “Зенитное положение: военные объединили системы ПВО в единый контур (Zenith Position: Military Formations Have Combined Air Defense Systems into a Single Circuit),” *Izvestiya Online*, 6 October 2020. <https://iz.ru/1069790/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/zenitnoe-polozhenie-voennye-obedinili-sistemy-pvo-v-edinyi-kontur>

Earlier, the Defense Ministry reported that the actions of the PVO at the Kavkaz-2020 exercises were directed from a single center with the aid of an automated command and control system. Enemy target data was transferred to the PVO assets on alert duty as soon as it was detected by the radars. Next, in real time mode, they were distributed among the launchers, and the order to open fire was issued.

“The servicemen’s long-standing dream is to integrate the entire air situation, which is controlled by the PVO of the Aerospace Forces, Ground Forces, and the Navy, into a single system... So a single commanding officer will answer for everything. If this was achieved during the Kavkaz-2020 exercises, then it is a great success. With such a system in place, no one will be shifting responsibility for the situation, no one will be able to say that the PVO of the Ground Troops or the Navy didn’t do its job, and so on,” Aytech Bizhev, former deputy commander-in-chief of the Commonwealth of Independent States’ Joint Air Defense, told Izvestiya.

According to the expert, the commanding officer sees the entire situation and, having all the resources at hand, distributes target designation per each asset for its destruction. This is important both in naval and in land-based theatres of military operations. Huge masses of Navy troops and forces were involved in the strategic exercises. And they all had to be protected from the air strikes. Today, it is impossible to move troop groupings without a PVO system present, for otherwise they are doomed to destruction.

According to the Defense Ministry information, in the course of one of the exercise episodes on the Ashuluk range, the Pantsir-S, Buk-M2, and long-range S-400 systems repelled a massive attack by a hypothetical enemy. Around 20 high-speed target missiles were utilized to simulate the attack. They were all shot down. In another situation, two dozen Southern Military District aircraft simulated an air raid with their “friend or foe” responders turned off. At the same time, some of the combat vehicles were operated at extremely low altitudes, following the terrain, while others flew at supersonic speeds high above the ground. The crews of various PVO assets and systems were rehearsing detecting them in real conditions, tracking and conditionally destroying them with simulated electronic missile launches.

Not only the ground systems, but also ships of the Caspian Flotilla, as well as the Black Sea Fleet, were involved in these maneuvers. The Black Sea Fleet flagship, the cruiser Moskva, also took part in them. It has a maritime version of the S-300F anti-aircraft missile system installed onboard, which makes it possible to provide cover not only for the ships’ squadrons, but also for land-based facilities. The cruiser has already taken part in the operation in Syria and has provided its PVO “umbrella” over the Russian bases in Khmeimim and Tartus.

“In Soviet times, the PVO forces kept under control practically all of the country’s airspace,” Aleksandr Gorkov, former chief of the Air Force Air and Missile Defense Troops, told Izvestiya. “However, the system was then disrupted, and until now the facilities and areas are not always covered adequately, especially at medium and low altitudes. The forces of the VKS are not always sufficient for the creation of an effective defense on tactical and strategic axis, so the assets of the Ground Troops and the Navy are being combined.”...

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