



Russian Armed Forces Conduct First ‘NCO of the Year’ Competition

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses the Russian Armed Forces first “NCO of the Year” competition. The Russians have struggled with enlisted professionalization since Soviet times, and while doing so, have experimented with several different models to meet the military’s needs. This experimentation has resulted in Russia choosing a different model of enlisted professionalization than the one practiced in the US/West. The US/Western model is not considered a good fit by Russians due to a different military decision making process and cultural reasons.

Russia’s enlisted professional system promotes the idea that professional enlisted soldiers, including warrant officers, are intended to be technical experts in their fields, but are generally not considered to be leaders. Even when in positions similar to that of US/Western platoon sergeants and first sergeants, these enlisted professionals are considered commander’s assistants and not leaders in their own right. Although leadership opportunities are limited for enlisted professionals in the Russian Armed Forces, there are other opportunities, including training, better pay, and other benefits. As an example, the Russian Aerospace Forces offer at least one almost four-year NCO course that grants a bachelor’s degree to graduates. Other such courses are under consideration. The Russian Armed Forces’ pay system considers both rank and position, with the greater importance on the latter. Therefore, it is likely that these airmen’s salaries are much closer to that of an officer’s salary than that of most of their enlisted brethren. In addition, these NCOs are usually allowed to homestead at the duty station of their choice.

According to the article, the competition involved more than 6,000 contestants, and was conducted under the auspices of the Deputy Defense Minister for Logistics, General Dmitriy Bulgakov. This competition was apparently of keen interest to Russian senior military leadership, as the personal interest of General Bulgakov and other senior Russian senior military leaders was noted. Although the Russian Armed Forces have chosen a different model for enlisted professionalization, it is clear that Russian senior leaders perceive enlisted professionalization to be an important issue concerning Russian military modernization. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



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Soldiers from 2nd Guards Tamanskaya Motor Rifle Division, Vitaly Kuzmin.

Source: https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/Commonwealth-Warrior-2011/i-p4XhB9b/0/b9bf2b17/X3/SoldierofCommonwealth_04-X3.jpg, Attribution: CC BY 4.0



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Source: “Roman Biryulin and Andrey Kaliy, “Кто лучший в заботе о солдатах? (Who Best Cares for Soldiers?),” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 27 November 2020. <http://redstar.ru/kto-luchshij-v-zabote-o-soldatah/>

The final part of the competition held at the 100th Separate Support Regiment in Alabino, near Moscow, was attended by 10 of the best senior NCOs. The winners of the stages in the districts, arms, and branches of the Armed Forces in the struggle for the right to bear the title of the best senior NCO of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation demonstrated knowledge in theoretical issues, skills, and abilities in performing practical tasks. This competition was held for the first time.

According to the results of the two-day competition, the highest number of points (174) was scored by Senior Warrant Officer Yevgeniy Sachko, a member of the Russian Federation Defense Ministry 12th Main Directorate. The second was Senior Warrant Officer Roman Lyaykht, a member of the Aerospace Forces. He has 165 points to his credit. Senior Warrant Officer Dmitriy Mukhametshin from Chita, speaking from the Eastern Military District, took third place. One hundred and fifty-three points were enough for the bronze award. Also in the top 10 of more than 6,000 NCOs of various subunits...

“The fact that you made it to the final is already a victory,” Deputy Defense Minister Dmitriy Bulgakov said. “Because you became the best in your districts and you won the qualifying stages in your arms and branches of the Armed Forces. I have always believed that the subunit’s senior NCO is one of the most important positions in the Armed Forces. It is not for nothing that a normal senior NCO in the army is called a father. Because for boys who joined the army from civilian life, in fact, you become second fathers. After all, you have a lot of tasks. Starting with the soldier’s appearance right up to his food and washing. Russian Defense Minister General Army Sergey Shoygu pays great attention to these issues... I would like to say that the final competition will become traditional, like the “Field Kitchen” or “Masters of Artillery Fire.” In addition, it is also planned to establish a special distinguishing badge – “Best Senior NCO of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.”...

The final competition was held in four stages. At the first stage, unit commanders identified the best subunit senior NCO in their military units. The second stage determined the best among the winners in the military units of the armies, arms, and branches of the Armed Forces. In the third stage, the winners of the previous stage competed for the opportunity to compete in the final. The final, fourth stage was conducted under the leadership of the Russian Federation Armed Forces chief of staff of logistics.

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As noted by Lieutenant-General Vladimir Trishunkin, Russian Federation Armed Forces chief of staff of logistics, the idea of the contest, which belongs to Deputy Defense Minister General of the Army Dmitriy Bulgakov, is correct and timely, because senior NCOs are not born, they become so in the course of intensive combat training. By the way, Vladimir Viktorovich himself was a sergeant and senior NCO at the beginning of his service. Before entering military school, he served two years as a conscript...