



Quadcopter UAVs to Be Used by Russian Ground Forces

OE Watch Commentary: According to the well-known military journalists Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul on the staff of the pro-Kremlin daily newspaper *Izvestia*, Russian ground reconnaissance forces will be issued small, limited-range quadcopters en masse this year. According to the article, these drones have already been issued and utilized in limited number. In September 2020 they were used in exercises by Russian ground forces at a military base in South Ossetia, a breakaway region of Republic of Georgia. That exercise and others revealed that quadcopters, while a valuable reconnaissance asset, have short range and time of flight and are vulnerable to jamming and ground fire. Still, quadcopters should prove valuable in urban combat and scouting ahead in mountainous terrain. It was also noted that the system is unpopular with dismounted soldiers who have to tote it for long distances in addition to the basic required kit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Based upon Ministry of Defense information, the number of state-of-the-art unmanned aerial vehicles in the ground forces has increased 70-fold as compared to 2012, when their mass purchases began.”

Source: Anton Lavrov and Roman Kretsul, “С дроном в разведку: стартует массовое оснащение армии квадрокоптерами (Reconnaissance by drone: Large issue of Quadcopters to Ground Force in 2021),” *Izvestia* (pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 15 January 2021. <https://iz.ru/1111609/anton-lavrov-roman-kretcul/s-dronom-v-razvedku-startuet-massovoe-osnashchenie-armii-kvadrokopterami>

Mass delivery of quadcopter-unmanned aerial vehicles for the ground forces will begin this year. The small, light aircraft will help the troops accomplish combat missions and daily tasks. They will augment the 2,000 fixed-wing drones deployed in the units right now. Although these quadcopters have shortcomings, they can turn out to be especially useful in reconnaissance. Until recently, inexpensive commercial UAVs were portrayed as a weapon of the guerrillas. In particular, extremists used them in quantity during engagements in Syria and Iraq.

The delivery of quadcopters to the troops will begin this year. They will be issued to reconnaissance companies and battalions. The new drones will be used for combat and in daily activities. For example, they can observe the conduct of drills and the unit’s area.

In 2019, the army conducted an experiment on the use of small copters. The majority of them were sent to Eastern Military District units. Several sets of items were also transferred to the other military districts. The test results were announced as successful at the end of last year.

The experiment ascertained that the UAVs have a shorter range and flight duration and are more vulnerable to the impact of electronic warfare systems and fire from the ground than the UAVs that are in the inventory. However, they can take off and land on any area and are capable of hovering over the same location for a long time, are simple to control, and are reasonably priced.

In September of last year, the Ministry of Defense reported on first use of quadcopters at reconnaissance subunits’ exercises of the 4th Military Base in South Ossetia. They used the drones to adjust fire and conducted an assessment of the targets’ destruction. The UAVs came in handy for both the riflemen and the tank crewmen.

The Eastern Military District Railroad Troops Brigade used them for other tasks. During the fall exercises, they employed the quadcopter for the rapid and precise determination of the locations of the destruction of a railroad track by an enemy saboteur-reconnaissance team and for the assessment of the complexity of the impending work.

“Small quadcopters can be used in reconnaissance,” Colonel Valeriy Yuryev, the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Union of Airborne Troops, stated. “One can effectively launch them from command posts or from vehicles on the march. But the drone turned out to be unnecessary weight for dismounted reconnaissance teams. We need to test the UAVs at exercises of various levels. We also should not forget that everything is not exactly the same in maneuvers as in actual combat. Active countermeasures from the enemy occur and strikes are conducted against the launch sites.

Not only regular armies but also terrorists assessed the utility of small quadcopters in military affairs. During the defeat of their groupings in Syria and Iraq, dozens of Chinese-made quadcopters were seized from the extremists’ bunkers. The guerrillas used them to conduct reconnaissance and attack targets. Small improvised bombs were suspended under the unmanned aerial vehicles. They managed to inflict losses to personnel, disable equipment, and even to blow up munitions dumps.