



Russian Peacekeeping Operation in Nagorno-Karabakh

OE Watch Commentary: From a military perspective, the recent Russian peacekeeping operation in and around the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh has been declared successful by the Russian media. In mid-November 2020, a Russian peacekeeping force of some 2,000 soldiers deployed to both Karabakh and the Lachin corridor between Karabakh and Armenia. As the brief excerpt from the military weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* points out, “in just a matter of weeks, Russian peacekeeping forces have created a full-fledged security infrastructure there.” The article goes on to describe the evolution and development of Russian peacekeeping forces as well as partial details from the current operation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.



Azerbaijani soldiers and Russian peacekeepers in Kelbadzhar district, Karabakh, Azerbaijan. 25 Nov 2020.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense (mil.ru) <https://bit.ly/3jPcBV5>, Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

The article begins by asserting that “since the beginning of the 90s, the [Russian] Armed Forces have gained vast experience in disengaging the warring parties.” Early on, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) began to form “the first specialized peacekeeping units and subunits,” and they were deployed to stem conflict in Abkhazia, Transnistria, and Tajikistan. The author recalls that in the mid-1990s “officers of the 589th [Guards Motorized Rifle] Regiment received training programs under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program...,” during which some of the “units traveled to the United States on several occasions to conduct joint exercises.” Some of these lessons, the articles claim, were used during joint peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. The author also describes some of the debate within the MoD about whether to create units specifically designed to handle peacekeeping operations (largely airborne) or to merely designate and train specific units within military districts to handle these types of missions. The result has been the creation of both dedicated peacekeeping units and nominal “peacekeeping units assigned to each military district.”

The author describes the current composition of the units now deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh, stating that “the core of the Russian peacekeeping force is made up of two brigades - the 15th Motorized Rifle and 31st Airborne Assault.” He asserts that “these units are constantly ready to carry out the assigned peacekeeping tasks,” which according to the author, “have been completed accurately and on time.” The article concludes on a positive note, asserting that “for three decades, the Russian peacekeeping forces have traveled a difficult path. Now these are highly efficient, well-trained and well-equipped units, ready to help at any time,” a validation that peacekeeping remains a very active and evolving concept in contemporary Russian military doctrine. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“The Russian Armed Forces currently have one of the most effective peacekeeping forces in the world....”

Source: Pavel Ivanov, “Стража мирной жизни: Российские Вооруженные силы располагают самыми подготовленными и эффективными миротворческими силами (Guardian of a peaceful life: The Russian Armed Forces have the most trained and efficient peacekeeping forces),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (a military weekly), 8 February 2021. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/60789>

...Since the ceasefire in Karabakh, in just a matter of weeks, Russian peacekeeping forces have created a full-fledged security infrastructure there. These are checkpoints, inspection points, specially equipped positions, headquarters, warehouses for the placement of humanitarian aid and other equally important objects. From the first hours of the operation, the Russian peacekeepers established a peacekeeping service and the implementation of all agreements.

The Russian Armed Forces currently have one of the most effective peacekeeping forces in the world. They include several brigades, aviation squadrons and battalions... also separate divisions, including medical, engineering, logistic.... Since the beginning of the 90s, the Armed Forces have gained vast experience in disengaging the warring parties. At the same time, the formation of the first specialized peacekeeping units and subunits began...

...The 589th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (GMRR)... became the first peacekeeping unit of the Russian Armed Forces.... The regiment received peacekeeping status at the end of 1992. Transnistria became the first region of responsibility of the 589th GMRR.... Later, the Volga peacekeepers began to fulfill their duties in Abkhazia...

...In 1992, the 554th Airborne Battalion was formed specifically for operations on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.... In the mid-1990s, the military-political leadership of Russia planned to actively use Russian peacekeepers abroad.... Therefore, officers of the 589th Regiment received training programs under NATO’s Partnership for Peace program. The regiment’s units traveled to the United States on several occasions to conduct joint exercises. At the same time, the Russian military-political leadership had plans to create separate regular peacekeeping forces....

...In 1996, the formation of peacekeeping forces began as part of the Airborne Forces. At the same time, a new position appeared in the command of the troops - the deputy commander of the Airborne Forces for peacekeeping operations. In the same year, a new peacekeeping brigade was formed, deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later deployed to Kosovo....

...Therefore, in 2016, a new reform of the peacekeeping forces of Russia started.... At the end of last year, the work was completed, and it is already possible to evaluate its results. The core of the Russian peacekeeping force is made up of two brigades - the 15th Motorized Rifle and 31st Airborne Assault. These units are constantly ready to carry out the assigned peacekeeping tasks. How successfully they can do this has been shown by the experience of the operation in Nagorno-Karabakh. All tasks were completed accurately and on time.

...At present, peacekeeping units are assigned to each military district for a certain period... If necessary, these battalions, companies and detachments can reinforce the permanent peacekeeping forces. They also begin to act when the peacekeeping mission is long. This will allow rotation of personnel and ensure high readiness of unused peacekeepers.

...For three decades, the Russian peacekeeping forces have traveled a difficult path. Now these are highly efficient, well-trained and well-equipped units and units that are ready to help at any time.