



## Russia Conducts Brigade/Division Force-On-Force Exercises

**OE Watch Commentary:** Although there was much ballyhoo over Russia's Vostok-2018 maneuvers in September, little has been mentioned in the Russian mass media about large-scale force-on-force exercises that were reportedly conducted in the Southern Military District in October. According to the accompanying press releases from the Russian Ministry of Defense, a number of units participated, including elements from the 8th, 49th, and 58th Combined Arms Armies, the 22nd Army Corps, the Caspian Flotilla, the Black Sea Fleet, the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army, military units directly subordinate to the Southern Military District, and certain spetsnaz units.

Although in terms of numbers of personnel and scope of operations the Vostok-2018 maneuvers were far larger, the October exercise featured large-scale force-on-force maneuvers. Apparently, the exercise is the first of its kind in recent memory involving divisions or brigades conducting exercises against one other. As Colonel-General Aleksandr Dvornikov, the Commander of the Southern Military District states: "For the first time in exercises of this level, the opposed forces principle was implemented, in which troops in two operational directions conducted combat operations against each other... Prior to the command staff exercise the troops of the military district conducted just company and battalion tactical exercises." The implication of the October exercise is that the Russians believe that large-scale warfare is now more a possibility than previously thought and that such warfare will not be conducted by large numbers of independent battalion tactical groups, but instead by brigades and divisions/regiments. Interestingly, the Russians have chosen to pit units against one another, instead of creating an opposing force (OPFOR) to replicate enemy capabilities. Apparently, the use of a notional OPFOR was either deemed not feasible or unnecessary for this event. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Military parade on the maneuvers "Vostok-2018" (Tsugol training ground, Trans-Baikal Territory).

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://мультимедиа.минобороны.рф/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=60539@cmsPhotoGallery>, CC 4.0.

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## Continued: Russia Conducts Brigade/Division Force-On-Force Exercises

**Source:** “АЧетыре дивизионных и бригадных тактических учения пройдут в рамках КШУ сгруппировками войск ЮВО (Four Divisional and Brigade Tactical Exercises to Take Place as Part of Command-Staff Exercise with Groups of Southern Military District Troops),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, 18 September 2018. [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12195952@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12195952@egNews)

*It is planned to conduct four divisional and brigade tactical exercises this fall as part of a major command-staff exercise with groups of troops from the Southern Military District. Colonel General Aleksandr Dvornikov, commander of the Southern Military District troops, talked about the concluding events in the summer training period.*

*“In the first 10 days of October naval infantry formations from the 22nd Army Corps of the Black Sea Fleet will conduct tactical exercises in Crimea at the Opuk combined-arms range,” Col. Gen. A. Dvornikov said.*

*“From 10 through 21 October the 150th Motorized Rifle Division and the 20th Motorized Rifle Brigade of the Southern Military District’s 8th Combined-Arms Army will take part in two-sided tactical exercises at the Prudboy combined-arms range in Volgograd Oblast, and two-sided exercises by the 42nd Motorized Rifle Division and the 136th Motorized Rifle Brigade of the Southern Military District’s 58th Combined-Arms Army are planned at four ranges in North Ossetia and Dagestan,” the commander added on the topic of the bilateral exercises...*

*A fourth set of tactical exercises will be one-sided and will involve military units from the Southern Military District Russian military base in Armenia at the Alagyaz and Kamkhud mountain ranges.*

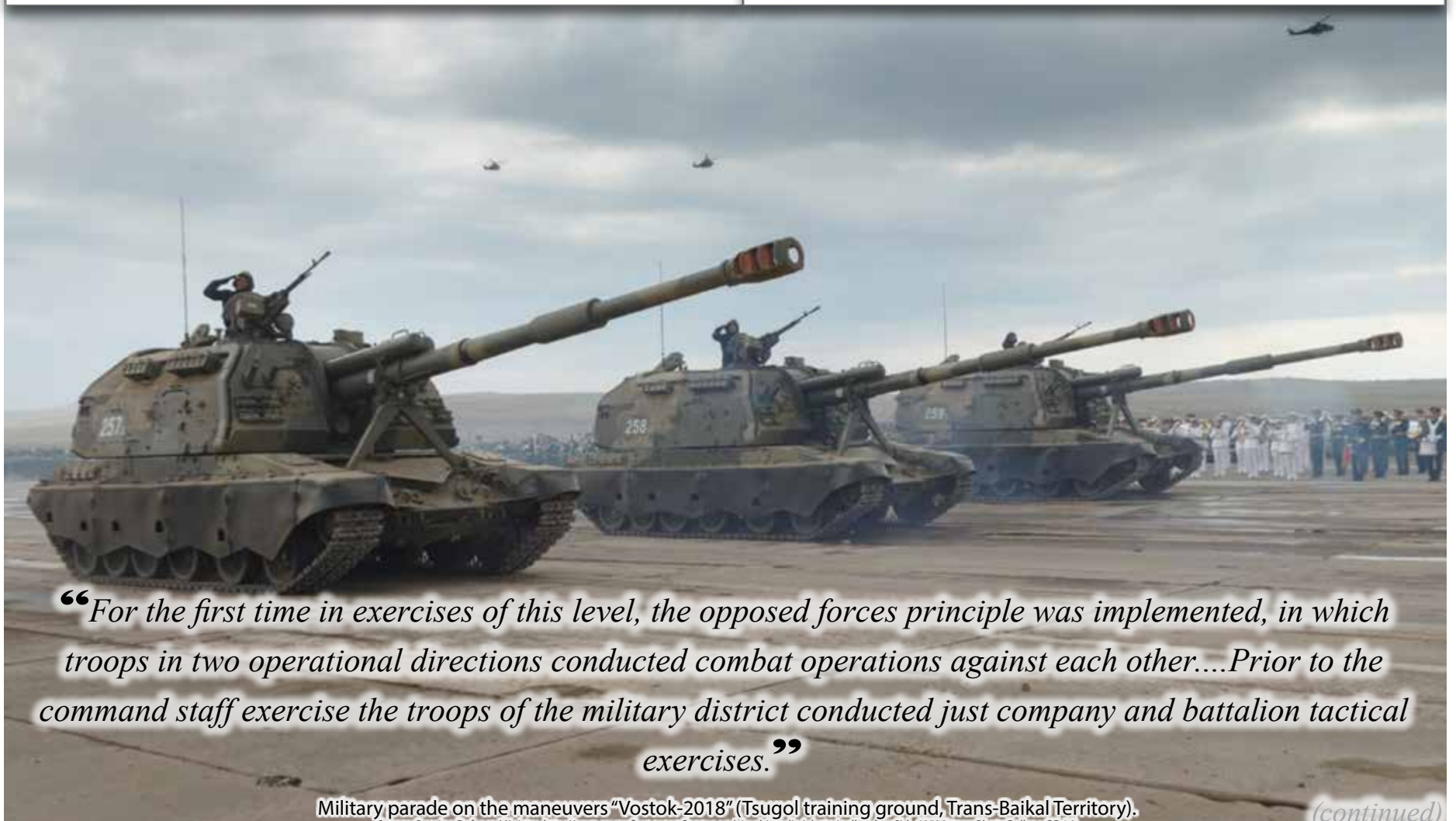
**Source:** “Соединения армии Южного военного округа (ЮВО), дислоцированные в Волгоградской и Ростовской областях принимают участие в двухстороннем командно-штабном учении (КШУ) на полигоне Прудбой под Волгоградом (Exercise with Southern Military District Formations Begins in the Volgograd Oblast),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, 1 October 2018. <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/forces/content/201810011602-mil-ru-j6tgf.html>

*Formations [Соединения] of an army of the Southern Military District based in the Volgograd and Rostovs oblasts are participating in an opposed forces command-staff exercise [командно-штабном учении] at the Prudboy training range near Volgograd.*

*Over the course of five days the commanders and the staffs of the formations will practice a set of tasks to improve practical skills in the uninterrupted command and control of operations of subordinate forces during a notional battle and in the organization and support of interactions between subunits while repelling notional enemy attacks...*

*The exercise of formations of the 8th Combined Arms Army of the Southern Military District will follow a single scenario as the final exercise of record [итогового учения] of the troops of the Southern Military District. It has begun simultaneously in seven regions of southern Russia under the leadership of Colonel-General Aleksandr Dvornikov, the commander of troops of the district.*

*...Up to 7,000 servicemen will participate in various stages of the gaming of tactical episodes and more than 2,500 pieces of military equipment will be involved, including approximately 20 aircraft and more than 60 helicopters.*



*“For the first time in exercises of this level, the opposed forces principle was implemented, in which troops in two operational directions conducted combat operations against each other....Prior to the command staff exercise the troops of the military district conducted just company and battalion tactical exercises.”*

Military parade on the maneuvers “Vostok-2018” (Tsugol training ground, Trans-Baikal Territory).  
Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://мультимедиа.минобороны.рф/мультимедиа/photo/gallery.htm?id=60539@cmsPhotoGallery>, CC-4.0.

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## Continued: Russia Conducts Brigade/Division Force-On-Force Exercises

**Source:** “Командующий войсками ЮВО объявил о завершении масштабного КШУ (Commander of Troops of Southern Military District Announces Completion of Large-Scale Command-Staff Exercise),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, 8 October 2018. [https://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12198892@egNews](https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12198892@egNews)

*Colonel-General Aleksandr Dvornikov, Commander of Troops of the Southern Military District, has announced the completion of a command-staff exercise involving troop groupings in the Caspian and Vladikavkaz Operational Directions.*

*For the first time in exercises of this level the opposed forces principle [принцип двусторонности] was implemented, in which troop groupings in two operational directions [двух операционных направлениях] conducted combat operations against each other. A leadership staff, in which a referee unit of more than 200 officers operated, was established to monitor and analyze the decisions of the commanders of the major commands and below. On-site evaluations were provided of the actions of all participants of the activity, including the execution by subunits of dozens of combat orders.*

*The leadership of the exercise paid special attention to evaluating the abilities of the commanders of all levels to make unconventional decisions in the combat training environment and to operate using the combat experience of modern armed conflicts...*

*During the tactical operations events, modern methods of combating cruise missiles as members of ship and aviation groups were used with support provided by shore signals intelligence assets and air defense assets. The destruction of enemy strike UAVs, the repelling of attacks by sabotage and reconnaissance groups, fire support as components of reconnaissance-strike and reconnaissance-fire loops, and other scenarios were practiced. Ships of the Caspian Flotilla performed live firings with the Kalibr missile system.*

*Summarizing the exercise, Colonel-General Aleksandr Dvornikov, Southern Military District Commander of Troops, noted that this method of conducting exercises both at the operational level, as well as at the command level, was advanced.*

*Prior to the command staff exercise the troops of the military district conducted just company and battalion tactical exercises. All of these were of the opposed forces type. During the exercises new methods were tested and modern principles of managing subunits in combat were used.*

*“The armies of the district are facing very large, formation-level tactical exercises, in which the opposed forces techniques that have been developed must continue,” Colonel-General Aleksandr Dvornikov indicated.*



Performing engineering tasks in preparation for the Vostok-2018 maneuvers.  
Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://мультимедиа.минобороны.рф/multimedia/photo/gallery.htm?id=60538@cmsPhotoGallery>, CC 4.0.