



Russian Railroad Troop Developments

OE Watch Commentary: Russia's Railroad Troops is a uniformed branch of the Material-Technical Support Troops with approximately 28,500 personnel. Although their structure and command relationships have often been changed, their general core purpose has not, which is providing technical support, rebuilding, and securing railways (including mine clearance); constructing new railways for military and (occasionally) civilian use; and managing a few armored trains in Russia's Southern Military District. The Railroad Troops are organized into 4 corps (aligned to each military district) and 10 separate brigades (with each brigade having 2-5 battalions). The Russian Federation has a highly developed network of 17 railway lines, with a total length of more than 86,000 kilometers of track. These tracks are primarily managed and serviced by the state-owned Russian Railways Company (RZhD), but can be serviced by the Railroad Troops if necessary. After the annexation of Crimea, the Russian Railroad Troops reportedly laid 177km of the 214km Zhuravka-Millerovo rail line that was built to bypass Ukraine. In addition to domestic duties, there has been mention in the Russian mass media of deployment of Russian Railroad Troops to Syria in order to rebuild the rail infrastructure.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* features an interview with Lieutenant General Oleg Kosenkov, Chief of Railway Troops. General Kosenkov discusses how the Railroad Troops have not only supported military operations, but have also been key in supporting natural disaster relief efforts. In line with this theme, the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses Russian plans to equip the Railroad Troops with more modern equipment to better support these efforts. Although the accompanying excerpted article from *Vedomosti* does not mention the Railroad Troops, the transfer of the Arctic Bovanenkovo-Sabetta rail line to federal control will likely mean that the Railroad Troops (which are accustomed to working in austere conditions) will be deployed to support this effort, thereby lowering construction costs. In sum, the Railroad Troops are not only seen as a military necessity, but also as an important tool during a humanitarian crisis and (sometimes) an economic enabler.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)



Lieutenant General Oleg Kosenkov,
Chief of Railway Troops.

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Competition for the best specialist and the calculation of railway troops in the Eastern Military District (2016).

Source: Mil.ru [CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)], <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Competition2016-02.jpg>.

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Continued: Russian Railroad Troop Developments

“The latest models of special equipment – all terrain vehicles, swamp buggies, amphibious vehicles, self-propelled pontoons, and others – are arriving in the railroad formations right now.”

Source: Aleksandr Tikhonov, “Переброска войск будет обеспечена (Troop Deployments Will Be Assured),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 October 2018. <http://redstar.ru/perebroska-vojsk-budet-obespechena>

[Kosenkov] ...our core purpose is technical support and reconstruction of railways. In the event of railway infrastructure being destroyed, for example the 4-km major rail bridge (and rail bridges are classed as minor, intermediate, and major) across the Yenisey river outside Krasnoyarsk, the most important thing is to rebuild it as quickly as possible so that traffic can resume. The extent of the damage will inform the decision on whether to rebuild the bridge along the old center line or make a near or more distant detour...

Rail transport remains the main method of moving supplies and personnel in our country. Military transport aviation cannot carry the same amount of men and materiel as rail can in the same compressed period of time. It can handle rapid-reaction missions but on the whole, our troop movements are by rail...So the mission assigned to us was to restore the rail bridge. Every structure for which we provide technical support has two or three preprepared rebuilding sites...

[Tikhonov] Oleg Ivanovich, with what kind of outcomes are the Railway Troops ending the 2018 training year?

[Kosenkov] Regarding what we call practical training work, the troops completed it by 1 September. Except for a task that was set in February by the Russian Federation Defense Minister, Army General Sergey Kuzhugetovich Shoygu, to build a road bridge across the Yenisey outside the town of Kyzyl to shorten the traveling distance and time for subunits of the 55th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade when moving to a training ground. There was no proper bridge there beforehand -- only a ferry crossing. We were given until 29 September to build the bridge. That objective was achieved and the bridge's opening ceremony and entry into operation took place 12 October. In 2018 the Railway Troops repaired 60 km of approach tracks not at 47 Defense Ministry sites. These were various types of repair -- raising track, or reinforcing it...

Source: Roman Kretsul and Aleksey Ramm, “Военные железнодорожники получили приоритет: Функционал железнодорожных войск будет существенно расширен (Military Railroad Personnel Have Received the Priority: The Railroad Troops' Functionality Will Be Significantly Enhanced),” *Izvestiya*, 14 September 2018. <https://iz.ru/783651/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/voennye-zheleznodorozhniki-poluchili-prioritet>

The Railroad Troops will be reinforced. The Ministry of Defense has made that decision. The realization of the concept of their expansion began this year, including the emphasis will be made on their participation in rescue work during emergency situations. New equipment is already arriving in the troops. During the course of the reforms of the end of the last decade, the status and role of the Railroad Troops were appreciably reduced...However, as a result, the Defense Department came to the conclusion on the need for these formations, which not only ensure the deployment of troops, but are also involved in the construction and repair of railroad tracks. The fact that the railroad troops proved themselves after the events of 2014 in Ukraine played a leading role in this...

*The Railroad Troops' functionality and technical capabilities will be significantly enhanced, a Ministry of Defense spokesman reported to *Izvestiya*. Not only the support of transport movements, but also rescue work during emergency situations and the elimination of catastrophes will be part of their missions. The latest models of special equipment – all terrain vehicles, swamp buggies, amphibious vehicles, self-propelled pontoons, and others – are arriving in the railroad formations right now. The troops should undergo complete reequipping by 2020...*

Source: Olga Adamchuk and Artur Toporkov, “«Газпром» и РЖД вместе могут построить самую северную железную дорогу России (Gazprom and Russian Railways Together May Construct Russia's Most Northerly Railroad),” *Vedomosti*, 29 October 2018. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/business/articles/2018/10/29/784911-zheleznuyu-dorogu>

A year ago President Vladimir Putin said that enterprises operating in the Arctic were already producing 10 percent of Russia's GDP. This may be why the government is thinking of relaunching one of the biggest transportation projects – Russia's most northerly railroad to the port of Sabetta. In order to construct this railroad (Bovanenkovo-Sabetta), it will be transferred to the federal level: The federal budget will safeguard the investors, an official and three participants in the negotiations said...

The railroad is needed to ensure the delivery of freight to places of extraction – according to the YaNAO Government's data, investment in opening up Yamal and the neighboring Gydan Peninsula will come to R7 trillion by 2035 – and also to move freight from the Northern Latitudinal Railroad, along which some 20 oil and gas fields are located, to the Northern Sea Route.

The railroad will cost R113-115 billion, someone else familiar with the talks' progress confirmed. Two talks participants promised that the new planning decisions will produce a saving: It will be a single-track railroad, without an embankment for a second track. The throughput capacity will be 8-10 million tons a year, the Governor's spokesman said. Gazprom's participation in the concession is logical: The company has already constructed the Obkaya-Bovanenkovo-Karskaya section employing technologies for permafrost...