



Assessing Russia's Ten-Year Military Spending Plan

OE Watch Commentary: A key component of the current Kremlin ideology posits that Russia's sovereignty relies upon strong and combat-ready military forces. Even though this military focus might entail belt-tightening in other budget areas (e.g. pensions, healthcare, education, etc.), providing for a robust defense remains a top priority. Kremlin pundits frequently repeat Napoleon's admonition that "Народ, который не хочет кормить свою армию, будет кормить чужую," (The people who don't want to feed their army, will end up feeding another). These sentiments are expressed in the accompanying excerpted article from the popular Russian daily, *MK Online*, where the well-regarded military analyst, Ruslan Pukhov, Director of the Center for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, is interviewed regarding the new State Armaments Program (GPV) for 2018-2027.

"Russia's primary threats and the main national missions, which face the country, lie on the continent. Therefore, we also need to make the emphasis on the priority development of the Ground Troops and VDV."

In the interview, Pukhov insists that Russia "is one of a few countries in the world that are really and not formally sovereign states," suggesting that countries which rely upon others for their defense are not truly independent. He points out that the new State Armaments Program (GPV), which budgets 19 trillion rubles (\$316 billion) toward defense, is actually less than the previous ten-year program when "taking inflation into account." He goes on to suggest that military expenditures is money well spent, asserting that "approximately half of the military budget goes to [domestic] purchases," and that therefore, these budget funds are "returned to the economy and stimulates its innovative development."

According to Pukhov, in the previous GPV, there was an "excessive bias toward expenditures for the Navy," where they directed funds toward "the construction of the most expensive large surface combatants." Pukhov applauds the more balanced apportionment of funds among the military branches in the new GPV, claiming that "the main national missions, which face the country, lie on the continent," and that therefore, the country's leadership ought "to make the emphasis on the priority development of the Ground Troops and VDV." Specifically, he recommends greater spending on "command and control, reconnaissance and communications systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, and new armored platforms."

Using rhetoric that is normally confined to more extremist sources, Pukhov posits that this focus on rearming "the ground troops and airborne troops" will help to "resolve the issue with the Kyiv Junta or the Baltic Nazis, if necessary..." The article concludes with Pukhov listing many of the new weapon systems which Russia hopes to add to its arsenal over the next 5-10 years, asserting that by 2028, the "Russian Armed Forces will have a totally new appearance in a technical regard and will obtain significantly higher combat capabilities." Despite economic challenges, military modernization remains a top priority for the Kremlin. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Tor-M2DT short-range anti-aircraft missile system displayed at 2018 Victory Day parade, Moscow.
Source: Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2018_Moscow_Victory_Day_Parade_54.jpg CCA BY 4.0.

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Continued: Assessing Russia's Ten-Year Military Spending Plan

Source: Olga Bozhyeva, “Эксперт рассказал, какой будет Российская армия через десять лет (The Expert Said What the Russian Army Will be Like in 10 Years),” *MK Online*, 1 July 2018. www.mk.ru/politics/2018/07/01/ekspert-rasskazal-kakoy-budet-rossiyskaya-armiya-cherez-desyat-let.html

The new State Armaments Program (GPV) for 2018-2027 has been approved. R19 trillion will be sent for the purchase of weapons and their modernization and another R1 trillion for the construction of new infrastructure. Isn't that a lot? Some people advise, for example, to build not tanks but roads. What in general are the new GPV's priorities? Will the country be able to fulfill it? Will it not be bankrupt? Moskovskiy Komsomolets asked Ruslan Pukhov, a member of the Public Council under the RF Ministry of Defense and the Director of the Center for the Analysis of Strategic and Technologies (TsAST), to respond to these and other questions.

[Bozhyeva] So, the main question – is about money. Enormous resources for defense – R20 trillion. Is there no way without this?

[Pukhov] The assessment of whether Russia is spending a lot or a little on defense – is a question of world view. Our country – is one of a few countries in the world that are really and not formally sovereign states. But you need to pay for sovereignty and sovereignty is expensive. The readiness to pay for sovereignty – this is not a question of the presence or absence of the needed resources, but the question of an ideological choice. There are very poor countries, for example, Cuba and the DPRK, among the sovereign countries. But there are very rich states – for example, Germany or Japan - among the states, which don't possess sovereignty....

...What is more, the expenditures for the purchase of weapons are de facto being reduced.... But, while taking inflation into account, the real amount of expenditures for the new weapons program will be reduced approximately twofold as compared to GPV-2020. If you will recall, when the GPV that is in force was adopted, a dollar cost approximately R30, today – this is R60...

[Bozhyeva] But the country requires a technological revolution. Would additional trillions for these purposes really hinder that?

[Pukhov] Expenditures for the purchase of weapons – this is not simply the irrecoverable expenditure of resources but actually investments in the country's economy. Thanks to them, highly skilled jobs are being created and innovative development and the progress of science and technologies are being stimulated.... Approximately half of the military budget goes to purchases, in other words, is returned to the economy and stimulates its innovative development...

[Bozhyeva] Some experts note the new program's better balance as compared to GPV-2020. That one allocated approximately R4.7 trillion for the development of the Navy and R2.6 trillion for the Ground Troops and VDV [Airborne Troops]....

[Pukhov] Russia's primary threats and the main national missions, which face the country, lie on the continent. Therefore, we also need to make the emphasis on the priority development of the Ground Troops and VDV. Judging by everything, the excessive bias toward expenditures for the Navy has been eliminated and the construction of the most expensive large surface combatants has been sensibly shifted to the future in the new GPV...

...We need to invest the resources, which have been freed up as a result of the rejection of naval gigantomania and the harebrained schemes, in command and control, reconnaissance and communications systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, and new armored platforms. Incidentally, it is precisely the ground troops and airborne troops that will have resolve the issue with the Kyiv Junta or the Baltic Nazis, if necessary, if they, who have been counting on NATO, will want to test our defense....

[Bozhyeva] On the development and purchase of which weapon systems do they plan to place the primary emphasis?

[Pukhov] The new GPV is betting on the initiation of the reequipping the troops with actually new generation models. First of all, this concerns the Ground Troops. After 2021, one can expect the initiation of deliveries of new-generation advanced ground-based platforms – Armata heavy (with the new T-14 Tank in the lead), Kurganets-25 medium tracked and Bumerang medium wheeled, Koalitsiya-SV 152-mm self-propelled artillery systems, light armored vehicles and motor vehicles of new types, new missile systems, unmanned ground systems and, obviously, new models of small arms based upon the Ratnik theme. There will be deliveries of new automated command and control netcentric systems, reconnaissance, command and control, and communication complexes, and new electronic warfare systems....

...On the whole, in the event of the complete realization of the new GPV, I think that the Russian Armed Forces will have a totally new appearance in a technical regard and will obtain significantly higher combat capabilities after a decade, by 2028....

When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

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