



Considering No-Fly Zones in Russian Military Science

OE Watch Commentary: According to the authors of the accompanying excerpted article from *Военная Мысль* (*Military Thought*), the subject of “no-fly zones” is understudied by the Russian General Staff. As the article points out, present official military guidance describes the creation of “no-fly zones,” “airspace closure,” and “aerial blockade.” The historical analysis includes non-Russian reviews of US and Western coalition operations in Libya, Iraq, and the Balkans. This contrasts to the homegrown case studies that are almost exclusively derived from the Soviet WWII experience.

In the practice of Russian military science, historical analysis is a systematic, detailed investigation—often a mathematical study—of the experiences of Russians and others. To Russian analysts, the article makes the point that this important military function requires reinvigoration. The authors note that current Russian “guidance” documents categorize aerial combat conditions as aerial supremacy to achieve “creation of no-fly zones,” aerial superiority to achieve “airspace closure,” and aerial blockade. The authors suggest that these conditions could be approached systematically by considering the factors of “compliance with legal authorities” (referring mostly to the United Nations), by country size, by number of participants, and by areas of enforcement. The article also notes that “Recent military conflicts reveal that creating and maintaining no-fly zones is a rather costly activity.” This indicates another standout factor that would be taken into consideration in correlation of forces calculations, as this concept moves into development of what they call “forms and methods” for applying it in the real world. While the Russians have certainly dealt with command of airspace issues in their current conflicts, the broader concept and practice of “no-fly zones” is getting a fresh look. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm, Vainer)**

“Analysis of guidance documents and scientific work shows that the theoretical side of enforcement of no-fly zones and closure of airspace requires further development.”

Source: A.V. Shlikov, A.U. Zolotov, “Взгляды на развитие теории закрытия воздушной блокады в современных условиях (Perspectives on Developing the Theory of Airspace Closure and Conduct of Airspace Blockade in Contemporary Conditions),” *Военная Мысль* (*Military Thought*), pp. 52-58, 12 December 2017.

“As we have seen, enforcement of a no-fly zone or closure of airspace is one of the primary tools of today’s international politics that supports the peacekeeping mission in various types of military conflicts by creating and maintaining an air-exclusion zone over the area of conflict. Over the past decades, advanced military powers often used no-fly zones to resolve issues of military conflicts. Such actions were carried out according to UNSC resolutions, e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1995, and Libya, 2011, as well as without UN sanctions, e.g. no-fly zones over Iraq from 1991 to 2003.”



Flights for combat use of aviation equipment VKS of Russia from the airfield “Khmeimim” (Syrian Republic).

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://syria.mil.ru/photo/gallery.htm?id=25401@cmsPhotoGallery>, CC 4.0.