



## Covert Supply Lines

**OE Watch Commentary:** The title of a recent article from the pro-government Russian daily *Izvestiya* says it all: “Ministry of Defense to Offer Private Carriers Stealth Contracts: Transport Companies will Ship Military Cargoes Expeditiously and Under Conditions of Secrecy.” Where in the past, these military transportation contracts had to go through a competitive bidding process and were not classified, under the new regulation, they “will be drawn up in an expedited manner following a simplified procedure and the documents will be totally classified.” While the experts quoted in the article claim that this new procedure “will allow the delivery of military materials within compressed schedules and without excessive bureaucratic delays,” it says nothing about the lack of oversight and an almost certain increase in corruption.

Oddly, the article asserts that this new covert procedure “will also be used for supplying Russian troops participating in peace-keeping operations beyond the country’s borders” and that Russia’s new National Guard “will acquire the right to purchase transport services under the simplified procedure.” The article quotes a military expert who suggests that defense officials need to resort to clandestine methods because “transportation of army cargoes is constantly being analyzed by foreign intelligence services,” but doesn’t explain why domestic transport services should also be secret. This new regulation will make tracking Russian military shipments more difficult for both foreign observers and Russians with an interest in what their government is doing. **End OE**

**Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“Izvestiya was told by the Ministry of Defense that the ministry intends to accelerate and classify outsourcing transportation of military cargoes.”*



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**Source:** A. Kruglov, N. Surkov and B. Stepovoy, “Минобороны предложит частным перевозчикам ‘стелс-контракты’: Транспортные компании перевезут военные грузы оперативно и в условиях секретности (Ministry of Defense to Offer Private Carriers ‘Stealth Contracts:’ Transport Companies will Ship Military Cargoes Expeditiously and Under Conditions of Secrecy),” *Izvestiya*, 27 February 2018. <https://iz.ru/708891/aleksandr-kruglov-nikolai-surkov-bogdan-stepovoi/minoborony-predlozhit-chastnym-perevozchikam-stels-kontrakty>

*In the event of war or foreign army operations transport companies will ship Russian military cargoes under “stealth contracts.” For this purpose the Ministry of Defense has developed a new regulation for working with private carriers. Contracts with them will be drawn up in an expedited manner following a simplified procedure and the documents will be totally classified. In the opinion of experts this will allow the delivery of military materials within compressed schedules and without excessive bureaucratic delays.*

*Izvestiya was told by the Ministry of Defense that the ministry intends to accelerate and classify outsourcing transportation of military cargoes.... The new regulation for purchasing transport services should ensure the necessary expeditiousness of military shipments under special circumstances. The time for signing the state contracts under such conditions will be significantly shortened. It will not be necessary to wait for the ten days specified under [current] law.*

*This plan will be put into effect in the event of threats to Russia’s military security. It will also be used for supplying Russian troops participating in peace-keeping operations beyond the country’s borders. The minister of defense and the director of the Federal Service of National Guard Troops will acquire the right to purchase transport services under the simplified procedure.*

*The issue of secrecy is given special attention in the new regulation. The carrier must have a license to conduct work using information containing state secrets. All of the enterprises, institutions and organizations familiar with the military plans will be obligated to not divulge this information.*

*It is being affirmed in the Ministry of Defense that the new process will not require additional expenditures from the federal budget. The cost of the “stealth contracts” should not exceed the costs of similar contracts executed under the standard procedure.*

*Viktor Murakhovskiy, chief editor of the magazine “Arsenal Otechestva” told Izvestiya that the new regulation will allow military shipments to be significantly accelerated. Today a state customer calling for the purchase of services must go through a lengthy competitive procedure. “The Russian Army has long used the services of civilian carriers. During large exercises a great amount of transportation for the deployment or regrouping of troops is engaged under outsourcing contracts,” reported Viktor Murakhovskiy....*

*...In the opinion of the expert the ensuring of secrecy is extremely important for covert transportation of troops and logistics items. “The transportation of army cargoes is constantly being analyzed by foreign intelligence services,” said Viktor Murakhovskiy. “The military know this and therefore they systematically take measures to protect this information. Even in peacetime the corresponding documentation is maintained under classified access....”*