



Engineer Troops Organizational Reforms

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses a major reform that is being made in the engineer regiments found in Russian Army Groups (a Combined Arms Army or Tank Army). According to *Izvestiya*, this reform will involve the regiments receiving augmented capabilities for obstacle/mine clearing and mine laying. New sapper-assault companies, sapper-spetsnaz units, UAV companies, and engineer robots will also now be found in these new regiments. In exchange, the engineer regiments will give up some road construction and pontoon bridging assets. In general, this reform means that Russia is increasing engineer maneuver support capabilities (in combat conditions), while shedding some of the more mundane (and less tactically relevant) maneuver support capabilities at the Army Group level. Although not mentioned in the article, it is likely that the Army Groups will maintain a few of its pontoon bridging sets, but the majority of pontoon-bridging and road construction assets will likely be managed at the military district level. Placing the majority of these units at the military district level may more easily facilitate the use of assets that are seldom used, but are of high-value for the military and civilian populace, as they are frequently used to repair civilian infrastructure during times of natural disaster.

The accompanying article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* features an interview with Lieutenant General Yuriy Stavitskiy, the Chief of the Engineer Troops of the Russian Armed Forces. Lieutenant General Stavitskiy discusses Russian demining activities in Syria, engineer modernization (including robotics), and the training of both Russian and foreign mine-clearing specialists at the Russian Federation Armed Forces International Antimine Center. Russian demining and explosive ordinance removal specialists have reportedly cleared 65 square kilometers of territory, 1,500 km of roads, more than 17,000 buildings of mines and other explosive devices and removed or destroyed a total of more than 100,000 explosive objects. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

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Source: Nikolay Surkov and Aleksey Ramm, “Саперы станут частью ударного тарана: Минобороны наращивает численность и расширяет функционал Инженерных войск [Sappers Will Become Part of the Shock Battering-Ram: The Ministry of Defense Is Building up the Strength and Expanding the Functionality of the Engineer Troops],” *Izvestiya Online*, 19 January 2018. <https://iz.ru/683387/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/sapery-stanut-chastiu-udarnogo-tarana>

The Russian Military Department is conducting the large-scale reform of the Engineer Troops. They will become a powerful strike force, which is designated for the conduct of modern warfare. An engineer-sapper regiment, which can perform standard missions and assault operations in cities, clandestine mine-laying, and rapid clearing of terrain of enemy explosive devices, will appear in each Army Group [a Combined Arms Army or Tank Army] in the next six months. This is being done based upon the experience obtained in Syria. In the experts' opinion, it is impossible to conduct successful combat operations in cities without well-trained and well-equipped engineer-sapper units...They will be optimized to accomplish assault and obstacle clearing missions, mine-clearing of the forward area, and clandestine mine-laying. Assault companies, sapper-spetsnaz subunits, and robot and unmanned aerial vehicle companies will be in their composition.

The first regiment of the new MTO&E will be formed in 2018 and will become part of 8th Combined Arms Army. A total of a minimum of four of those army units are being created. In the future, they plan to transition other Engineer Troops regiments (at least six) to the new MTO&E. Right now, there are battalions of sappers, road construction personnel, pontoon brigade personnel, and specialists on engineer obstacles and signaling in the composition of engineer-sapper regiments. During the course of the reform, the strength of the road-bridge construction and pontoon subunits will be reduced, but then again, assault personnel and sapper Spetsnaz personnel will appear.

The assault sappers, who are dressed in armor, will provide the clearing of the path for the advancing infantry – to destroy obstacles and permanent fire positions and to blow up buildings. The Spetsnaz will be involved with the clandestine minelaying of facilities in the enemy rear and the organization of mine ambushes. There will be more ordinary sappers in order to ensure the effective clearing of the terrain from landmines, mines, and improvised explosive devices that have been installed by the enemy.

*Military Expert Oleg Zheltonozhko explained to *Izvestiya* that the increased attention to the Engineer Troops is absolutely justified since well-trained and well-equipped engineer-sapper units are very important in the conditions of modern wars. “The combat operations in Syria demonstrated that the sapper subunits are very much in demand in conditions of local wars,” Oleg Zheltonozhko pointed out. “They must work directly in the forward area and in close cooperation with the combined-arms units. This coordination plays an especially important role in urban conditions”...*

**Izvestiya* previously reported that, according to the Ministry of Defense concept, sapper-assault personnel battalions will become part of the composition of military district brigades and companies will augment army regiments. It is assumed that the formation and combat shakedown of the new assault subunits will take several years. They only began to train “engineer-spetsnaz” officers at Tyumen Higher Military Engineer School in 2014. And special courses for sergeants and privates opened at the military district training centers in 2015.*

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Continued: Engineer Troops Organizational Reforms

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-Russian Ground Forces Commander-in-Chief, Colonel General Oleg Salyukov



Lieutenant General Yuri Stavitskiy
Source: Mil.ru, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuri_Stavitskiy_1.jpg, CC BY 4.0.

Source: Viktor Khudoleyev, “У военных инженеров не бывает условностей: У военных инженеров не бывает условностей [Military Engineers Have No Conventionalities: Experience of Combat Use of Engineering Subunits Is Constantly Analyzed and Generalized],” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 19 January 2018. <http://redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/35731-u-voennykh-inzhenerov-ne-byvaet-uslovnostej>

January 21 is Engineering Troops Day. On the threshold of the professional holiday Lieutenant General Yuriy Stavitskiy, Chief of the Engineer Troops of the Russian Armed Forces, answered *Krasnaya Zvezda*’s questions...

[Khudoleyev] Yuriy Mikhaylovich, tell us about the specific nature of the fulfillment of combat tasks in Syria by servicemen of the Engineering Troops, including specialists of the Russian Federation Armed Forces International Antimine Center.

[Stavitskiy] The special features of the mine clearance that was carried out in Syria under conditions of combat operations – under complex climatic conditions, moreover, that we are not accustomed to – consisted in the high density of mines and the presence of a multitude of improvised explosive devices of various modifications and yields between three and 120 kg, radio- and wire-controlled, as well as a considerable number of devices designed to be nonremovable and surprise mines. In 2017 detachments of the Russian Federation Armed Forces International Antimine Center cleared mines from the cities of Aleppo, Palmyra, and Dayr az Zawr in Syria. In the course of those humanitarian operations more than 6,500 hectares of territory, 1,500 km of roads, and more than 17,000 buildings were cleared of mines, and more than 100,000 dangerously explosive objects were neutralized and destroyed. The work was both hard and dangerous.

[Khudoleyev] Was the experience acquired there of value? Were lessons drawn for the future?

[Stavitskiy] I can speak with confidence about the increased level of training of both Russian and foreign sappers at the Russian Federation Armed Forces International Antimine Center. This was founded, on the one hand, on the celebrated school of Russian military engineering science. On the other, on the experience that accrued, inter alia, in Syria. Our sappers had to encounter a great diversity of mines and dangerously explosive objects. Here there is still a great deal to be analyzed, generalized, and conveyed to the specialists...Extensive work was carried out in 2017 to make changes to the officer training programs, taking account of the Syrian experience. We will continue this work in 2018...One of the main tasks that the Engineering Troops fulfilled in Syria was, I will stress, to clear mines from terrain and facilities. In the course of this, approval was given to the Uran-6 multifunctional robot-engineering mine clearance system, the Skarabey guided inspection robot-engineering system, and the Sfera guided inspection robot-engineering system. Their adoption for supply is scheduled for 2018. This is reliable hardware.

Based on the results of the fulfillment of special tasks by the Engineering Troops in Syria, the development of future engineering armament means has been organized – a multifunctional robot-engineering system for clearing antitank mines (MRTK-RT), a condenser explosive instrument (TPVK-43), an induction mine detector (IMP-3), individual and group sources of electricity, and other means that enhance our potential and broaden the arsenal.

[Khudoleyev] What is the system for training future officers for the Engineering Troops like today, as well as young specialists of engineering subunits?

[Stavitskiy] Engineering Troops specialists are trained by two military educational institutions and four training centers. We train officers with higher operational-tactical training – I will name it officially – at the Military Institute (of Engineering Troops) of the “Russian Federation Armed Forces Combined-Arms Academy” Ground Forces Military Scientific Training Center. We train specialists with full military special training at Tyumen’ Higher Military Engineering Command School. We train junior specialists of the Engineering Troops at the 187th and 210th Interbranch Regional Training Centers. The 66th Interdepartmental Methods Training Center functions to train specialists in the sphere of mine clearance for the Armed Forces and other Russian Federation security structures. It is entrusted with the tasks of training and retraining specialists to clear terrain of dangerously explosive objects and for the mine detecting service. The Russian Federation Armed Forces International Antimine Center engages in training foreign specialists to look for, neutralize, and destroy improvised explosive devices and to clear mines from terrain and facilities during peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. When training troops, we introduce new forms and methods of conducting lessons, everything most progressive, interesting, and productive. We revive competitiveness by holding competitions regularly. We are doing everything to ensure that every brigade and regiment has one shock subunit by the end of the year.