



Specialist Training for Russian UAV Pilots

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian military continues to develop unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) technology, something they consider a key component of asymmetric warfare. Integrating these new technologies with traditional training proves a unique challenge. According to the brief excerpt from the pro-Kremlin daily, *Izvestiya*, Russian military leaders have initiated plans to transfer command of drone elements to “specially trained officers.” As the excerpt points out, the initiative “intends to bring the organization of the field operations of elements equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) up to a new level” by training all drone squadron commanders in a new four-month specialist program.

According to the experts quoted in the article, the Russian military began the initiative due to the increasingly large role drones play in Syrian combat zones. According to the article, drones are “now a key reconnaissance resource” in the military’s arsenal. This is supported by “several separate drone squadrons in the Aerospace forces,” including one permanently conducting reconnaissance missions in Syria and another two regiments organized in the Navy.

The author stresses the reconnaissance uses of medium and heavy drones while explaining the strategic advantage provided by employing specialists to command UAV squadrons. The commanders’ specialized knowledge will increase effectiveness and maximize efficiency in the field. The officers are trained in “the specifics of the employment of UAV and [the trained specialists] know how to organize the field operations of the squadrons with the maximum efficiency, how many vehicles are needed to monitor a designated area, how to establish interaction with headquarters, and so forth.”

While non-specialists can operate small drones, training is critical to effectively operate medium and heavy UAV. The article remarks on the timeliness of training drone specialist officers, contending that this will ensure the maximum utilization of drones, which the Russian military is increasingly deploying abroad. **End OE Watch Commentary (Johnson)**

“The command of the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) intends to bring up to a new level the organization of the field operations of elements equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles.”

Source: [Nikolay Surkov, Aleksey Ramm, “Командиры «пилотов беспилотников» пополнят ВКС в 2018 году,” [Officers Commanding ‘Drone Pilots’ Will Replenish the VKS in 2018] *Izvestiya Online*, 17 January 2018. <https://iz.ru/687961/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/komandiry-pilotov-bespilotnikov-popolniat-vks-v-2018-godu>]

The command of the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) intends to bring up to a new level the organization of the field operations of elements equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). As of 2018 they will be directed by specially trained officers, who have been specifically schooled in the intricacies of the accomplishment of reconnaissance missions with drones. Experts believe that against the background of the combat operations in Syria the number of UAV in the field has grown and that they are now a key reconnaissance resource.

Izvestiya was told in the Aerospace Forces Main Command that as of 2018 drone elements will be commanded by specially trained officers. They are very familiar with the specifics of the employment of UAV and know how to organize with the maximum efficiency the field operations of the squadrons, how many vehicles are needed to monitor a designated area, how to establish interaction with headquarters, and so forth....

...There are several separate drone squadrons in the Aerospace Forces at this time. One is permanently in Syria, where it is tackling reconnaissance assignments. In addition, two UAV regiments have been organized in the Navy.

Denis Fedutinov, expert in the field of drone aircraft, told Izvestiya that the presence in the units of trained UAV specialists will ensure the better-skilled maintenance of the systems and raise the efficiency of their employment.

“The decision to entrust drone systems to specialist officers is very timely,” Denis Fedutinov observed. “They know all the possibilities and technical features of the products in service, this is why they are capable of supporting long operating timeframes. This is particularly pertinent at this time, when the number of UAV in the field is growing by the year. It is hard to ensure the proper level of use of the purchased systems without special know-how.”

The expert says that training is particularly pertinent in the use of medium and heavy UAV.

“Army portable systems intended for operation at a tactical level may be controlled by relatively low-skilled users. In the case of heavier and costlier vehicles, command and control must be exercised by specially trained officers,” Denis Fedutinov added....