

## A Review of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces in 2017

**OE Watch Commentary:** The government of Kazakhstan continues to implement a number of reforms in the country's armed forces, particularly regarding the modernization of its weapons and equipment inventory. The accompanying excerpted article reviews important developments in the Kazakh Armed Forces in 2017, providing an update on how this modernization process is going and what this could mean for Kazakhstan's defense industry and security cooperation. The article, from the Russian language news website *Inform Buro*, notes some basic information about the armed forces, including its "annual budget of 382 billion Tenge (\$1.15 billion)." This number is down roughly \$500 million from a couple of years ago, but still represents one of the largest defense budgets in Central Asia and it is not likely to drop any further soon.

The article points out that the Kazakh Air Force now has Su-30SM fighters and that "by the end of the year, there will already be eight aircraft in Kazakhstan, almost a full squadron." The author states that "within the next few years the fleet of combat aircraft will be upgraded" and that this follows Kazakhstan's acquisition of various transport aircraft, including the "C-295 from Spain" and the "Mi-17 and Mi-171 helicopters from Russia" a few years ago. This is in addition to the acquisition of "four Mi-35M helicopters" and "another four helicopters [to] be delivered."

The article also includes an update on the production of the mine-resistant ambush-protected "Arlan" and that "the exact number of (the Arlan) armored vehicles in Kazakhstan's inventory is unknown," but "there are an estimated 200." One of the main goals for the growth of Kazakhstan's defense industry has been to purchase weapons and equipment from various international defense firms with a stipulation that production will take place in Kazakhstan. While the large number of Arlan armored vehicles in service is only an estimate, news of its continued production confirms that Kazakhstan's defense industry is experiencing some growth. Lastly, the author mentions that at the center of the modernization process "are domestic engineering enterprises and foreign defense enterprises, mostly Russian." If Kazakhstan's acquisition of additional Su-30SM fighters and Mi-35M attack helicopters in 2017 is any indication of the direction of the country's defense industry, it appears that Russia is maintaining a significant part of this sector. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

*"Involved with this are domestic engineering enterprises and foreign defense enterprises, mostly Russian."*



Kazakh Sukhoi Su-30SM at Irkutsk-2.

Source: Alexey Korshunov, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AKazakh\\_Sukhoi\\_Su-30SM.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AKazakh_Sukhoi_Su-30SM.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0.

**Source:** Bedenko, Grigoriy, "Вооружённые силы Казахстана: итоги 2017 года (The Armed Forces of Kazakhstan: the results of 2017)," *Inform Buro*, 13 December 2017. <https://informburo.kz/stati/vooruzhyonnye-sily-kazahstana-itogi-2017-goda.html>

*The Armed Forces of Kazakhstan celebrated its anniversary this year – 25 years since its establishment. The Kazakh Army today is not the same as it was a dozen or so years ago. 80 thousand soldiers and officers, most of which are contractors, an annual budget of 382 billion Tenge and a rearmament program, which is being very actively implemented. Inform Buro prepared a review of events in Kazakhstan's Armed Forces in 2017.*

*...The newest multifunctional Su-30SM fighters have looked particularly effective and by the end of the year, there will already be 8 aircraft in Kazakhstan, almost a full squadron...Today, the most experienced pilots of the 604th air base at Taldykorgan fly the Su-30SM...Within the next few years the fleet of combat aircraft will be upgraded. Just three or four years ago we saw how the military transport aircraft, the C-295 from Spain, came to us (and) the Mi-17 and Mi-171 helicopters from Russia. Now it's on to combat aircraft...The latest acquisition of the Air Force are is four Mi-35M helicopters.... In December or early January, another four helicopters will be delivered...*

*In 2017 Kazakh ground forces continued to be supplied with a completely new type of armored vehicle. It is the heavy armored personnel carrier "Arlan," which is manufactured by the joint venture Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering...Arlan is a 16 ton mine-resistant ambush protected version of the (South African) Paramount Group's Marauder...The exact number of (the Arlan) armored vehicles in Kazakhstan's inventory is unknown. It appears, from open sources, that there are an estimated 200...*

*It needs to be noted that the rearmament program of Kazakhstan's Army includes the modernization of existing Soviet-made equipment. Involved with this are domestic engineering enterprises and foreign defense enterprises, mostly Russian...*