



Spetsnaz Minelaying Detachments

OE Watch Commentary: While many countries have renounced or limited the use of landmines, Russia continues to develop and strengthen its ability to use this weapon on the modern battlefield. The brief excerpt from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestia Online*, describes the formation of new “special minelaying detachments,” capable of “stealthily” entering the “enemy’s rear areas in two or three armored vehicles... to plant various types of controlled engineer munitions.”

The first company-sized unit “is already operating within the 1st Guards’ Engineer-Sapper Brigade,” (Murom, Vladimir Oblast) and is purportedly armed with “the newest armored vehicles and high-tech systems with artificial-intelligence elements in their armory.” The vehicles are a “spetsnaz version of the homeland-manufactured ‘Tigr’ armored vehicle” which “thanks to their high off-road capability” are capable of “conducting rapid raids into the enemy’s rear areas.” The unit is armed with “both conventional Soviet- and Russian-produced mines and intelligent systems,” which are “equipped with various electronic (seismic, thermal, optical) sensors and a system of remote control from a special tablet.”

According to the military expert quoted in the article, “the Russian Army is devoting great attention to the use of engineer munitions.” Mines can offer an asymmetric advantage to a smaller force as they are able to “block off roads and areas of terrain that the adversary might use for maneuvering or transporting cargo,” while reducing “the risk to our own fighting men.” This expert goes on to add that “mines remain... one of the most effective and popular means of armed combat.”

The article dismisses the notion that landmines should be banned, asserting that “despite criticism from human rights campaigners, given proper control and observance of all the requirements, explosive obstacles pose a danger only to the adversary.” The Russian military continues to enhance its ability to employ mines both in defensive, and as this article suggests, in offensive operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Special minelaying subunits have been created in the Engineer Troops, capable of secretly penetrating the adversary’s rear areas in order to plant explosive obstacles or destroy important assets there.”

Source: Nikolay Surkov and Aleksey Ramm, “В российской армии появились «стелс-саперы» (‘Stealth Sappers’ Have Appeared in the Russian Army),” *Izvestia Online*, 26 December 2017. <https://iz.ru/674692/nikolai-surkov-aleksei-ramm/v-rossiiskoi-armii-poiavilis-stels-sapery>

Special minelaying subunits have been created in the Engineer Troops, capable of secretly penetrating the adversary’s rear areas in order to plant explosive obstacles or destroy important assets there. The “stealth sappers” have the newest armored vehicles and high-tech systems with artificial-intelligence elements in their armory. Experts note that mines make it possible to cover the flanks, constrain the adversary’s maneuvers, and set up ambushes with an insignificant number of personnel being involved.

The Defense Ministry has informed Izvestia that one further type of spetsnaz has been created in the Russian armed forces -- special minelaying detachments. The first such company is already operating within the 1st Guards’ Engineer-Sapper Brigade. It is expected that a similar subunit will appear in every engineer brigade.

In a special minelaying company there are several dozen high-caliber engineers. These subunits are intended not for comprehensive minelaying of terrain, but for pinpoint, clustered application. The spetsnaz men stealthily move up to the front line or into the enemy’s rear areas in two or three armored vehicles and plant various types of controlled engineer munitions there undetected. Their target may be a bridge over a river or an important road along which enemy troops are sure to pass. Using secretly planted obstacles, it is possible to set up an ambush, to cover a threatened zone, or even to blockade a population center by mining its outskirts.

For moving around, the “stealth sappers” use a spetsnaz version of the homeland-manufactured “Tigr” armored vehicle. Thanks to their high off-road capability, these vehicles make it possible to conduct rapid raids into the enemy’s rear areas, and they provide the sappers with sufficient firepower and armor protection against possible contact with the adversary. The special companies’ armory comprises both conventional Soviet- and Russian-produced mines and intelligent systems. As Izvestia has reported previously, entire explosive complexes have already been developed for the Russian Army, equipped with various electronic (seismic, thermal, optical) sensors and a system of remote control from a special tablet.

Military expert Oleg Zheltonozhko has noted that the Russian Army is devoting great attention to the use of engineer munitions. “They are an effective means of covering terrain and do not require the constant presence of personnel -- which is especially important where soldier numbers are small, as they are, for example, in special subunits,” the specialist noted. “It is possible to block off roads and areas of terrain that the adversary might use for maneuvering or transporting cargo. A competently planted minefield replaces an entire detachment. At the same time, the risk to our own fighting men is reduced.”

Oleg Zheltonozhko added that mines remain as one of the most effective and popular means of armed combat. “Despite criticism from human rights campaigners, given proper control and observance of all the requirements, explosive obstacles pose a danger only to the adversary,” the expert explained....