



## Bolstering the Russian Ground Forces, the Cossack Way

**OE Watch Commentary:** Since the Russian Federation has always been a continental power, almost all of its wars and conflicts have been primarily fought on the ground. Therefore, the Russian Ground Forces have long been considered the most important branch of the Armed Forces, though proponents of the strategic nuclear forces and aerospace defense may differ with this assessment. The accompanying excerpted article from *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* lays out the case for augmenting the Russian Ground Forces with Cossack formations. According to the article, the Russian Ground Forces currently have approximately 280,000 personnel, but in the event of an armed conflict, 200,000 to 350,000 servicemen would be required in each military district adjacent to the front. Although Russia does possess other militarized forces, such as the National Guard and FSB Border Troops, these forces are an insufficient number to support a major conflict. Russia is tinkering with an operational reserve system, but it appears at this time that it has little functionality at best. Since greatly increasing the size of the Russian Ground Forces seems unlikely, the author proffers the solution of augmenting the Ground Forces with Cossack formations, much as the Cossacks augmented the imperial army in Tsarist times. These forces would provide an economical alternative to a large standing army and would also be valuable for securing the rear, an important point considering the General Staff's view that war does not occur just at the front, but throughout the breadth of the defense. Due to the changing character of war, Cossack bands may be called upon to defeat enemy special operations forces operating behind enemy lines, or to suppress domestic dissent fomented by enemy propaganda and social media. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

*“Rumors have circulated throughout the country about the latest change of the model of the military-administrative division of Russia’s territory...”*

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(continued)



## Continued: Bolstering the Russian Ground Forces, the Cossack Way

**Source:** Konstantin Sivkov, “Нарайка в помощь «Армате» (A Whip to Help the Armata),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, 5 February 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/48094>

*Through Defense Ministry efforts the impression has formed that our Ground Forces conform to all requirements; however, a comparison of their current composition with figures of previous periods forces a person to ponder...Thus, our Ground Forces had 670,000 to 780,000 persons during 1994-1995, while according to Internet data, they have 280,000 today. At that time there were around 70 divisions; today there are 8 plus 27 tank and motorized rifle brigades, which corresponds approximately to 25 estimated divisions...*

*In Russia's Military Doctrine and the list of missions facing the Armed Forces, we will single out those in which a key role is set aside for the Ground Forces. Hence it follows that for defense of the country, the Ground Forces above all must be capable of supporting RF Armed Forces strategic deployment, territorial defense, and a crushing defeat of the enemy in likely wars and armed conflicts.*

*In these conflicts and wars the Ground Forces' proportion of the overall numerical strength of the grouping involved can be from 40-50 to 70-80 percent depending on the area of outbreak and nature of the enemy. Accordingly, our Ground Forces must field a grouping that is from regimental to divisional in scale in 1-5 days for resolving border incidents. In the course of a week or two they must send a corps- or army-level grouping to the armed conflict area. In 1-3 months they must form a grouping equivalent to one or two Great Patriotic War fronts...it turns out that the numerical strength of our Ground Forces should be 450,000-550,000. These very rough estimates give an idea of the order of magnitude.*

### **The Rear as the Front**

*The primary territorial defense missions are to combat sabotage teams, destroy terrorist groupings and bandit forces, and secure and defend facilities of great political, economic, and spiritual importance to the state. The district zone of responsibility may have several thousand very important facilities (from 1,500-2,000 to 3,000-3,500)...the necessary personnel for resolving territorial defense missions will average from 200,000 to 350,000 servicemen, and this is within just one district adjacent to the front...*

*Naturally, other security structures will be involved in territorial defense missions, but only Rosgvardiya, The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and Federal Security Service (FSB) do not have the requisite armed force elements. According to open-source data, Rosgvardiya has around 340,000 persons. There are no valid data as to strictly how much of a military component there is -- operational units and formations (particularly a special-purpose division and brigades), special rapid-response detachments (SOBRs), and special-purpose militia detachments (OMONs).*

*By analogy with the Ground Forces and excluding militarized security, it can be assumed that their overall strength is a maximum of 150,000-200,000 and the forces are distributed to eight districts. Each district accounts for an average of 20,000-25,000 servicemen. The Rosgvardiya grouping will be built up through maneuver in the region adjacent to the front, but all the same it is a matter of doubling these forces at the maximum -- no one will relieve Rosgvardiya of the performance of missions in other areas of the country.*

*With the outbreak of a border or armed conflict, the RF Armed Forces Ground Forces together with Rosgvardiya in the zone adjacent to the front still can create the necessary grouping for territorial defense, and this is on condition of performing partial mobilization as a minimum. But even in this case capabilities for missions in the interior of the country no longer will remain. But in a local war in the border zone, even with full mobilization, all the main forces of the Armed Forces Ground Forces will be used in the zone of combat operations, the Rosgvardiya personnel and servicemen of rear-service units of the Armed Forces are insufficient for territorial defense.*

### **From Farmsteads to Military Settlements**

*There are only two solutions: either increase the RF Armed Forces Ground Forces by approximately 70-80 percent or establish territorial military-industrial settlements. Their composition and structure have been substantiated... I will note only that from an administrative aspect the territorial military-industrial settlements (TVPPs) will have to be subordinate to the heads of rayons and towns, and from an operational aspect to local territorial defense command and control entities, and be under the control of FSB military counterintelligence.*

*It can be figured that up to 30 percent of settlement personnel will join formation in full mobilization, i.e., a little more than a half-million persons must live in such settlements within one district to form a grouping of 150,000-200,000. Settlement personnel themselves will maintain the authorized arms and combat equipment through tax and other benefits. In combination with high morale and proficiency of personnel who mastered military affairs from an early age, this appears to be a sufficiently powerful and effective tool for ensuring national security in a territory. We essentially are talking about revival of the Cossacks, but on a new basis...in order to solve the problem of defense of such an enormous territory as ours, the reestablishment of the Cossacks on a new conceptual and technological basis probably is the only solution.*