



Sinking the Armata?

OE Watch Commentary: When the Kremlin first included its new T-14 Armata tank in the Victory Day parade in 2015, many observers expressed dismay at the country's seeming facility in transforming a technological concept into actual production. They suggested that the Kremlin's ability to concentrate resources on developing hi-tech military armaments could significantly alter any future balance of forces. Over the past couple years, however, some of these concerns have dissipated. While the original plan called for the production of 2,300 next generation, Armata-class systems (T-14 tank, T-15 BMP and T-16 armored recovery vehicle), these figures have been scaled down to 132 Armata-class vehicles by 2021. Yet even this reduced target may now be out of reach. As the brief excerpt from the weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (VPK) points out, production problems have further delayed hitting the planned production target (44 vehicles) in 2019.



T-14 Armata at rehearsal of parade in Moscow 2018.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-14_Armata_\(41072270525\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-14_Armata_(41072270525).jpg) CC-BY-2.0

The article begins by describing a recent visit by Defense Minister Shoigu and the ministry's finance experts to the plant where the Armata series are being produced. They discovered that instead of the 44 planned for completion, "the plant will supply only 16 vehicles, by the end of 2019." The stated reasons for the delay in production are manifold. There has been an extremely high rate of personnel turnover, particularly within senior management, with the article pointing out that "according to some reports, this was due to financial abuse." Design flaws have also hampered production. As the article describes, the crew capsule on the T-14 does not rotate with the turret, which places great "emphasis on optical means and electronics, which can fail in battle." Financial constraints have also limited production. The article states that "the full development of the factory is hindered by a large number of debts, including to commercial banks." These debts preclude any capital investment into the production facilities to accelerate production. The article suggests that the Ministry of Defense (MoD) is unable to provide additional funding because of "unforeseen expenses arising in Syria and in connection with the US withdrawing from the INF Treaty."

The article concludes by pointing out that the MoD plans on conducting "complex military tests [on the Armata series] before deciding on bulk purchases," and that "there is still a rather long way before this system is fielded." If nothing else, the problems associated with the production and fielding of the Armata series of armed vehicles suggests that there is often a gap between the Kremlin's bellicose rhetoric and reality. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...There is still a rather long way before this system [Armata] is fielded..."

Source: Oleg, Falichev, "Армату ждет долгая дорога (Armata is waiting on a long road)," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (Military Industrial Courier), 20 August 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/52041>

On 12 August, Sergei Shoigu made a working trip to the troops of the Central Military District, where he visited defense industry enterprises, in particular Uralvagonzavod. The Minister checked the progress of the state defense order, listened to the reports of the heads of enterprises, the command of the Central Military District....

...The Minister's personal visit is always connected with resolving serious issues. Including those that require urgent organizational or financial measures. Judging by the fact that he was accompanied by Deputy Minister of Defense Tatyana Shevtsova, who was in charge of the monetary support of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, we can conclude that the issue concerned not only the timing of the defense order, but also the payment of already concluded contracts, which could be in jeopardy....

...The Minister's trip to one of the leading defense enterprises in the country is an occasion to talk about the situation with the supply of armored vehicles to the troops, and primarily created on the Armata platform... It concludes contracts for the supply of at least battalion sets. The case in point is T-14 (Armata tank), T-15 (BMP on the same platform) and T-16 (BREM - armored maintenance vehicle). There could be problems.

In accordance with the contract concluded with Uralvagonzavod, 132 Armata tanks should be delivered to the Armed Forces in three years. This is a contract for an experimental military batch of vehicles on the promised heavy tracked platform Armata, signed by the Russian Defense Ministry with JSC Uralvagonzavod Scientific Industrial Corporation at the end of 2015. In 2018, at the Army-2018 forum, it was prolonged and involves deliveries, we will repeat, of a total of 132 pieces of equipment, including T-14, BMP T-15 and BREM T-16 vehicles, which were supposed to start from the end of last year....

...We divide 132 into three and come to the conclusion that the plant should supply 44 vehicles annually. But as it became known to the Military Industrial Courier, by the end of 2019, the plant will supply only 16 vehicles, four of which are BREM.... But even taking into account this shipment, the shortage will be 28 vehicles. To produce them for the time remaining until the end of 2019 is unrealistic. There is a clear lag behind the schedule....

...In general, over the past two years, the Uralvagonzavod NPK has gone through several stages of updating the management team.... The reasons were not named, but according to some reports, this was due to financial abuse.

...In addition, a number of Armata weapons systems, as we have already said, require further testing and trial operation in the troops.... There are questions about the control of the crew in the armored capsule over the combat situation around the tank. It is not possible to turn the capsule like the turret, so the emphasis on optical means and electronics, which can fail in battle....

...Unfortunately, the full development of the plant is hindered by a large number of debts, including to commercial banks. "In fact, all the profitability that we have goes to servicing the loan portfolio," said Oleg Sienko, the former CEO, back in 2016.

As the head of the MoD, one cannot stop the modernization of our Armed Forces.... On the other hand, it was forced to save money as much as possible due to unforeseen expenses arising in Syria and in connection with the US withdrawing from the INF Treaty....

If the Armata tank will withstand all the perturbations, as prescribed by the end of 2019, then the Ministry of Defense, we repeat, will conduct complex military tests before deciding on bulk purchases. This was said by Yuri Borisov.... So before serial production of the "Armata" there is still a rather long way before this system is fielded.