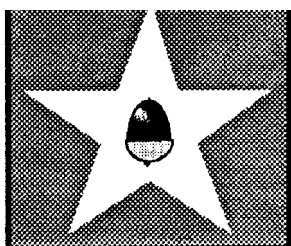


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The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

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Military Reform

Since Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia, first as Prime Minister in 1999, then subsequently designated by Boris Yel'tsin as acting President on 1 January 2000, he has wrapped himself in the flag and promoted the military at almost every turn. He largely owed his success in the presidential elections in the spring of 2000 to the military intervention in Chechnya. The course of his military reforms has, however, not run smoothly, though he periodically reminds the military of their importance in his vision for Russia. Recently, by announcing his plan to move to a professional military and abolish conscription, he has reaffirmed his political interests and his commitment to the future of military reform. It is a policy that raises numerous important questions. How will Putin reconcile the costs of military reform with the fragile nature of the Russian economy? Are his various reform measures disparate or part of a coherent plan to achieve stability within the Armed Forces? ¹

Significant steps have already been taken toward putting into practice what may be regarded as his strategy for the future direction of military reform; these will be delineated below. In re-establishing the Ground Forces High Command, Putin has finally moved from the debating stage of military reform to taking firm action.

Putin's plan for the development of the Russian armed forces, 2001-2005, envisages the creation of a traditional three-branch structure (Ground Forces, Air Force and Navy) within which the ground forces will play a key role. The merger of the Air force and Air defence force had already taken place as part of Yel'tsin's military reforms. The re-creation of the Ground Forces High Command suggests that Putin is willing to confront the issue of military reform in a more resolute manner than his predecessor. Greater mobility, discipline and professionalism, he says, will denote successful reform of the ground forces. Putin has thus made clear what he considers to be the priority for future reform, but he has not defined the exact targets of that process.

Putin has chosen to move the ground forces centre stage within the process of military reform, reflecting their historical importance. Traditionally in the Soviet period the ground forces were the most significant element of the conventional armed forces. The experience of World War II confirmed their paramount role in the defence of the country. Moreover, Soviet planning to counter NATO forces during the Cold War depended on their ability to achieve overwhelming conventional superiority in Europe, consequently the ground forces were required to be tank heavy. Indeed, the numbers of Soviet tanks on the eve of the German attack in 1941, which remained classified long after the war, were finally revealed in the post-Soviet period at around 27,000. It is hardly surprising that such preparedness for

mechanised warfare was economically costly. This fact predisposed the ground forces towards a conservative posture vis-à-vis military reform during the 1990s. In 1997 Yel'tsin abolished the Ground Forces High Command in an attempt to curb the growing power of the traditionalists within the reform struggle. The ground forces had led the MoDs resistance towards Yel'tsin's military reforms; Yel'tsin considered the removal of the command as a political expedient. When Marshal Sergeyev was defence minister the nuclear deterrent and therefore his Strategic Rocket forces (SRF) consumed the lion's share of the defence budget, further worsening the condition of the conventional forces. Conflict later ensued between Chief of the General Staff Kvashnin and Sergeyev on the nature of their respective authority, culminating in Kvashnin's call, in July 2000, for a switch in funding from the SRF in favour of the ground forces.

Putin recreated the directorate in March 2001, appointing as its Commander-in-Chief Colonel-General Nikolay Kormil'tsev. Perhaps more than any other action, this illustrates the inherently cyclical nature of military reform in Russia in recent years. In addition, Kormil'tsev was afforded the honour of being made Deputy Minister of Defence; neither the Commanders of the Air Force nor the Navy are privileged in this manner, though it was traditional for the ground forces commander in chief in the Soviet period.² He is thus to be seen as *primus inter pares*. The Ground Forces High Command has also reassumed some of the functions that were taken over by the General Staff when the ground forces command was abolished. Kormil'tsev has the control of all seven military districts (MDs) in Russia (a power formerly possessed by the General Staff). Furthermore, the following are subject to the control of the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces: the Armed Forces Main Combat Training Directorate, Army Aviation, Engineer Troops, NBC Defence Troops, Missile Troops and Artillery, Tactical Air Defence and the Military Education Directorate amongst others. Consequently Anatoly Kvashnin, Chief of the General Staff, has lost some of his power, in a move that has fuelled speculation about his future.³

An article written in May 2000 by Anatoly Kvashnin and Makhmut Gareyev, President of the Academy of Military Sciences, revealed much of the thinking underlying the reform of the ground forces. In considering the lessons to be learned from the Great Patriotic War, with its deep and abiding impression upon the psyche of the military, Kvashnin and Gareyev advanced a number of factors that must be acted upon by the military today. Explaining the military surprise of the launch of the German attack in 1941, amongst other reasons it seems that Stalin's rejection of the advice of both the People's Commissar for Defence and the General Staff proved to be crucial. Consequently, by ignoring the collective wisdom of the military leadership, troops were not combat ready and were as a result unable to repel German aggression. The strategic command and control of the Soviet armed forces was thus undermined by political considerations and ultimately by Stalin himself.

*The significance of this lesson is underlined by the current state of military thinking in Russia: the importance of placing the Army and Navy in combat readiness in a timely manner grows by many times in our days with the defensive nature of military doctrine, since an aggressor chooses the time of attack and poises in advance to strike, while defenders still need time to ready the Armed Forces to repel aggression.*⁴

Further reduction in the size of the armed forces had already been mooted. Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov recently commented on the target set by the Security Council

The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

to reduce the armed forces to 1 million. He believes this could be met in 2002.⁵ It is planned to reduce the ground forces by 180,000. To many in the military this represents a further sign of the drift in military reform under Putin, relying on the cyclical device of further downsizing.

Colonel-General Yury Bukreyev, writing in *Voyennaya Mysl'* September-October 2001, warned against any further reductions in the personnel level of the ground forces, based on his concern about the combat effectiveness of the Armed Forces. A former Chief of the Main Directorate of Ground Forces and Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Bukreyev is convinced of the need for greater combat readiness amongst the ground troops since, in his view, future operations will involve local wars and anti-terrorist operations. He noted that low training and combat readiness standards are currently endemic, given the chronic shortages of the military budget. Restructuring the training programme to meet the challenges of modern warfare is an ongoing debate. A preoccupation with the effectiveness of the ground troops is shared by other senior generals in the Russian military and this will become a benchmark against which the success or failure of any military reform will be measured.

Bukreyev is forthright in his attempts to blame the Russian authorities for the shortages of officers among the ground forces; this has emerged due to the lack of '*material and moral support from the State*'.⁶ It is clear that among the military figures involved in the debate special attention is being paid to training and recruitment, in addition to a widespread agreement on improving combat readiness. However, the solutions offered by Bukreyev are perhaps more theoretically pure than they are achievable in practice. His recommendations for the reform of the ground forces may briefly be summarised as follows:

- Matching the organisational structure as well as numerical strength with the specific requirements of assigned missions.
- Maintaining a high level of combat and mobilization readiness.
- Supplying the ground forces with modern weapons and hardware.
- Adequately training mobilization reserves.
- Upgrading and improving command and control.⁷

Of course, providing that the economic strength existed within Russia it would be a simple solution to supply modern weapons and hardware, but this ignores the present realities in Russia. If successful restructuring and personnel reduction is to have any chance in the context of the ground forces it will take a concerted effort on the part of those insiders with an appreciation of the limitations of finance. The appointment of General Kormil'tsev may well be a step forward on this meandering path of reform; he has not only an awareness of the strategic implications of reforming the ground forces, but a formidable track record in the Siberian MD for cutting his cloth according to his means.

Kormil'tsev's Aims: 'Mother Infantry Will Still Serve Russia'

It is worth noting that Kormil'tsev is an outsider, coming from Omsk, and a man with a formidable reputation as a military reformer in Siberia. He will play a critical

role in the development of the ground forces and consequently in the future success of Russian military reform as a whole. A brief biography is useful to help appreciate the significance of his appointment:⁸

*Nikolai Viktorovich Kormil'tsev was born on 14 March 1946 in the city of Omsk. After completing his education in Omsk Higher Combined Arms Command School, he served as platoon, company and battalion Commander and Deputy Regimental Commander. After completing a period of further education at the Frunze Military Academy in 1978 he was appointed Regimental Commander. He was the Chief of the district training centre in Omsk between 1983-88. In 1990 he completed his time in the General Staff Military Academy, after which he commanded an army corps then an army in the Far East MD. Kormil'tsev became Deputy Commander of the Transbaykal MD in 1994 and Commander of the MD in 1996. In 1998 he was appointed Commander of the newly unified Siberian MD.*⁹

Kormil'tsev gained an excellent reputation for achieving high standards of discipline in the Siberian MD. As head of the largest MD in Russia, he accomplished his plan to address the shortage of platoon commanders by creating new courses for junior lieutenants. Furthermore, the MD had the fewest recorded crimes within the Russian military.¹⁰

Since his appointment he has defined the missions assigned to the ground forces in peacetime:

"Maintaining high combat and mobilization readiness of military command and control entities, formations, military units and establishments.

Ensuring the guaranteed transition of troops from peacetime to wartime within prescribed deadlines with the objective of performing missions of repelling enemy aggression in coordination with branches of the RF Armed Forces and other troops and military units of the Russian Federation.

Training command and control entities and troops to conduct combat operations and perform other missions in accordance with their purpose.

Establishing and maintaining stockpiles of arms, military equipment and materiel to the extent and in amounts conforming to missions assigned to the Ground Troops.

Participating in peacekeeping operations conducted along the line of the UN Security Council or in accordance with RF international commitments.

Participating in mopping up in the aftermath of accidents, catastrophes and other natural disasters.

In wartime:

Carrying out tasks under the strategic deployment plan.

Carrying out operations to rout an enemy together with the other branches of the Armed Forces (or with the Armed Forces of signatories to the Collective Security Treaty).

The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

Participating in repelling an enemy air, space attack and airmobile and amphibious and other joint operations with other branches of the Armed forces.

Participating in stopping attempted terrorist attacks and sabotage at strategically important state and military facilities.

Forming, training and despatching strategic reserves and replenishing troop losses in personnel and equipment."¹¹

All of these objectives are underpinned by the very first item: *preserving a high combat and mobilization readiness*. Nevertheless, it is clearly far from a reality in the present day capacity of the ground forces. Difficulties in achieving a high level of combat readiness attended the first Chechen War, 1994-96, and though this was subsequently improved upon in the second war launched in 1999, these issues remain unresolved. The elite Artillery Training Brigade within the Moscow MD affords a striking example of the scale of the problem. The training of high-class artillery personnel was allocated only R2000 (\$63) for the whole year in 2001. The MoD sent the money on time strictly for its designated task, namely re-equipping lecture halls with light bulbs and paper. No fuel was allocated to the brigade, which has compelled connection to the electrical grid through a voltage rectifier in order to carry out firing training - and this appears to involve pushing buttons and yelling 'Fire!' in the absence of live ammunition.¹² In addition to rectifying these deficiencies further reform of the ground forces will necessitate careful rethinking of their strategic and tactical use in modern conflict; this has been underway for some time. Furthermore, many of the underlying factors in producing a high quality and effective level of leadership amongst officers also demand attention at both political and military levels.

Kormil'tsev considers the re-forming of the Ground Forces High Command an important factor in improving the standards of Russia's conventional forces. The MDs are part of a sprawling administrative framework whose function is to maintain military units in a given territorial area. In war each MD has an immediate defensive function, carrying out the mechanics of mobilization; transporting troops to the theatre of operations, supplying them and ultimately providing reinforcements if necessary. In this context the structural changes to the MDs have a direct bearing on improving the effectiveness of the ground forces. Kormil'tsev views the new MDs as being based upon a low-cost option that will help ensure the military security of the regions. As he stated, 'a transition is being made to a territorial principle of leadership of all Russian Federation troops, with MDs given the status of operational-strategic commands'.¹³ Each MD has at least one division containing six permanent readiness regiments. Kormil'tsev hopes that by concentrating on the units, at least some servicemen will be properly trained.¹⁴

These structural and administrative changes, a familiar feature of Russian military reform, are taking place in the context of attempts to improve Russia's preparedness for future war. The Ground Troops are seen by Kormil'tsev as a mobile component of the Armed Forces (he undoubtedly refers to the question of how deployable the ground forces are) that have to maintain a high level of combat readiness. To achieve this they must be trained in a thoroughly professional manner, with a high level of morale and they should be properly outfitted with modern arms and equipment. This is a recurring priority in the Russian military reform process, though little has yet been achieved.

He also appears to be realistic about the difficulties involved in meeting these goals and in his assessment of the present condition of the ground forces. Local wars and regional conflicts are the hallmarks of the post Cold War international order. According to Kormil'tsev there is no longer the traditional obsession amongst the military with preparing for the outbreak of World War III; this is an adjustment made in the thinking of the Russia's military leadership more rapidly than many in the west have recognised.¹⁵ That alleged adjustment is, however, more theoretical than practical. The main threats to the Russian Federation come from regional and internal conflict that can only be met by improving its conventional capability, whilst the threat of local conflicts escalating into regional war is a factor in military forward planning in Russia. In that context, he believes that the emphasis between nuclear and conventional forces has now shifted in favour of the latter, thus the threat assessment has also altered and with it the belief in the nature of future war involving high technology weapons systems. High-precision weapons and the recent developments in modern warfare, in Kormil'tsev's opinion, have changed the nature of military tactics. He considers it an important priority to find suitable methods of countering such weaponry as well as seeking the introduction of new weapons systems and closely monitoring their use by ground troops. He realises the significance of modern weaponry as an area for development, he also understands that the quality and effectiveness of the ground forces can be determined to a large extent by the quality of its modern armaments. His frustration is patently obvious.

Weapons Procurement: Future Promises & Present Realities

Russian military leaders have had a solid track record in accurately forecasting their enemy, and even to a large extent the nature of future war itself (though not in Afghanistan in 1979-80s). They have however, proven less successful in meeting its challenge practically. Therefore the efficiency of military organization is vital in meeting these potential threats. Command and control bodies degrade if they are not subject to constantly preparing and planning military operations. In modern Russia, even with the priority placed on military reform by Putin, economic factors coupled with officer shortages have sapped the strength of training and military exercises. Kvashnin and Gareyev may have had this in mind when they alluded to the huge organisational development in the Armed Forces in the 1930s, whilst military efficiency declined to owing to the 'irrational use of available resources'.¹⁶

Greater efficiency is needed in the use of resources within the Russian military for two main reasons. There simply is not the strength in the Russian economy to underpin the kind of modernisation that the General Staff would wish to see, and reform will have to be measured accordingly. In consequence, rather than seeking to radically improve on levels of weapons procurement in the next few years, there is an increasing awareness that the military must continue to renovate and maintain their existing weapons and equipment, and that money and time will have to be guided accurately into the required areas. As the process of Putin's military reform unfolds, particularly in the potential upheaval of transferring to a professional army, financial resources may become even more stretched. Putin appreciates the need to find resources to support his military reform programme, as he recently stated:

Rearming the troops and buying military equipment demands major state expenditure. The necessary resources are being found, but our main criteria here must be effectiveness and maximum return. All the services

The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

*responsible for national security must work as a united whole. We must get rid of irrational duplication, and we must continue to work on standardizing technical and rear-services provision and military training as well as on co-ordinating research and development.*¹⁷

It can be taken as axiomatic that effective military reform and support for the ground troops is dependent upon equipment and weapons procurement. It is significant, however, that Putin places such an emphasis on the 'effectiveness and maximum return' and the need to avoid 'irrational duplication'; he is realistic about the state's financial capabilities, seeking in practical ways to enhance the condition of the ground troops within these economic parameters.

It is easy to make promises to resolve these problems at some point in the future, though incurring the risk of being accused of wishful thinking. Putin has embarked on an ambitious programme that does precisely this. On 23 January 2002 he duly approved an armament programme 2001-2010 costing R7,000 billion: money which the State simply does not possess. It was the culmination of a lengthy wrangle over the necessary level of spending, which according to the General Staff required R12,000 billion. Laying aside the enormous expenditure envisioned by the 43-volume programme, it seems to comfortably provide for the needs of the military.

The armaments programme promises new weapons for the ground forces, including 470 gram 18 shot Gsh-18 pistol, capable of penetrating any body armour at a range of up to 25 metres. Although the experimental cartridges exist, the cost has been too great to supply the ground troops in quantity. Moreover, a long promised replacement for the Kalashnikov continues to be on hold. For some time there have been demands for improvements to reconnaissance-strike and fire complexes: these are to be supplied in the programme. It is envisaged to include a fifth-generation fighter, a new generation of underwater and surface vessels, new infantry fighting vehicles and armoured personnel carriers. Even the T-95 tank features as part of this ambitious and comprehensive programme. The one apparent oversight is the absence of sufficient money in the treasury.¹⁸ Although a proportion of this equipment may come into service before 2010, the emphasis will be on developing weapons systems; the armed forces will have to wait until after that date to be re-equipped. Kormil'tsev believes that the Ground Forces will have more control over the design and development of their own weapons. Evidently, he hopes that through greater involvement in the design and procurement process the benefits, however small, will accord with their own priorities, and not those set by someone else.¹⁹

Deputy defence minister Kudelina has forecast a marked increase in expenditure on recycling arms in 2002 (though she has not explained what she means by this). This should reach R10.3 billion, representing a 72% increase on 2001 levels of spending.²⁰ Yet the details that have emerged about the defence budget for 2002 does not suggest that recent trends will be easily reversed.

In 2002 Russia will spend R79 billion on purchasing arms, representing an increase of 40% on the previous year. Despite this, there are little grounds for hope that it will resolve the problems of equipping the armed forces. Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov has stated that most funding will be spent on research, building new weapons systems and repairing and upgrading existing systems.²¹ Unfortunately, as the course of military reform in Russia has confirmed in the past decade, there is no guarantee that the R79 billion will be properly spent, or that the armaments programme announced by Putin will avoid the same unseemly fate as a similar

programme adopted by Yel'tsin. The last armaments programme was scheduled between 1996-2005, with the ambitious target of upgrading or replacing 80% of arms and military equipment. It was truncated due to insufficient funding, which never reached more than 25% of required levels.

The Reform of Military Education & Combat Training

Despite the poor showing in the first Chechen War, 1994-6, and the problems that have emerged during the current 'counter-terrorist' campaign, the military are slow to implement practical improvements, and the State has hardly been in a position to resolve these difficulties. What is needed, as Russia seeks to prepare for future war, is greater combat-readiness, command and control and staff exercises, improvement in the quality of recruits especially into the officer caste, efficient use of scarce resources and improved use of intelligence. In particular, without investment in the education of the next generation of leaders at senior and junior level and the standard of recruit, morale and combat readiness will continue to decline.

One key to achieving higher standards from the ground forces is to concentrate on the improvement of the military training for the officer cadres within military institutes, optimizing the duration of courses and reinforcing the professional training of specialists. Kormil'tsev is convinced that junior specialists should receive practical training in training formations. The performance of the ground forces will entirely depend upon the quality of education and training which they receive.²² Its significance can only be further heightened by the plan to professionalize the armed forces.

Furthermore, Kormil'tsev has concluded that if the officer corps can be preserved then the ground forces will not suffer further decline. In an attempt to raise the social prestige of the ground troops, work is already under way to establish a new national public holiday: Ground Troops Day. However, training centres with revised and updated training methods must also be established if the decline in standards is to be truly halted. Kormil'tsev directly links the provision of quality military education to the problems in maintaining officers, particularly junior officers within their posts:

*The military education system must be taken to that qualitative state in which it will be able to ensure that the Ground Troops are manned with officers in the necessary numbers and with the necessary specialities; with requisite training quality and the rational expenditure of allocated assets; and with the creation of worthy conditions of life and daily routine and of material incentives, especially for young officers and officers with families. In my opinion, this will significantly reduce the outflow of officers from the Armed Forces and will affect not only the quality of and status of troop combat training, but also the level of military discipline, which is no less important.*²³

Kormil'tsev is convinced that the military have often failed to train dedicated professionals with a demonstrable mastery of their art. Resolving such deep difficulties within the institutions in question will be a task requiring both structural and curricular reshaping. But Kormil'tsev does not underestimate its long-term importance.

The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

Of course, the concept of advancing the cause of military education in the context of military reform is not new to the Russian Armed Forces. Indeed there is a long tradition of doing precisely this.

After the disastrous Winter War against Finland, November 1939-March 1940, much time was spent by the leading figures in the leadership of the Red Army meticulously scrutinising the lessons to be learnt from their experience. One essential element in these discussions was the proposed reform of military education. This was to include revising the curricula in the military schools and academies, as well as placing a greater emphasis upon combat training. The lessons of the Great Patriotic War 1941-45 provided the mainstay of the education and training processes in the half-century following. The experience in Afghanistan, however, was not consolidated into changes in combat training until after the 1994-96 Chechen war. Kormil'tsev has encouraged the Main Combat Training Directorate of the Armed Forces, now under his command, to examine methods of improving the quality of combat training during a period of chronic under funding. Indeed, options involving low-cost methods of training are being successfully introduced in the Moscow MD, though Kormil'tsev hopes to replicate this in other MDs. The Moscow MD, like all the others, is seeking to cope with financial shortages by engaging in low-cost methods of training. Portable firing equipment, for instance, can be assembled quickly in the course of exercises and tank crews can be trained using computer simulation whilst minimising costs. Its experiments in reducing the length of track used for driving combat vehicles from the traditional 4-6 km track to a 500 metre version has aroused a great deal of interest.²⁴

Kormil'tsev has emphasised that combat training requirements cannot be separated from economic realities, they should simply take account of such restrictions, but training should be adapted to the needs of particular formations or units. Indeed Kormil'tsev addressed his concerns to a meeting of the heads of the combat training bodies held in Moscow from 22-24 October 2001, the first such meeting for ten years. He made clear that without improvements, the system for organising combat training would remain ineffective. The mandatory features, in his view, included the following:

- Strict fulfilment of the regulations governing military training.
- Clear planning of combat training schedules to include key documents on a typical week, month and year in order that commanders can properly manage all training.
- Enhancing the pedagogical mastery of supervisors of combat training, with a greater emphasis placed upon creativity in organising field training and tactical exercises.
- Maximising the use of the training facilities and carrying out proper maintenance. Recognising the limitations of under-financing, all training should be planned accordingly, particularly making sure that where appropriate, training is preceded by simulations. Training should also be developed at barracks level.
- Closer collaboration between the units and sub-units of the other branches of the armed forces should be fostered, as well as between the power ministries

stationed in the vicinity. The frequency of joint drills and exercises should be increased in order to address the issue of the interaction.²⁵

Clear plans will be formulated to cover the delivery of effective training, from enhancing its management to supporting the quality of instruction. Kormil'tsev wants training at platoon-company level to be carried out in three stages. These should focus on training individuals as combat specialists, followed by the squad or gun team, and finally, platoon or company training. He intends to carry out a comprehensive reassessment of all combat training programmes, in order to raise the standards. Training standards at unit level are however, low due to poor officer quality and quantity, shortage of fuel and ammo, and the poor quality of conscript. Even the contract service experiment fails to provide combat-ready soldiers. Despite the financial incentives that are offered to *kontraktniki* serving in the 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan, problems have persisted, ranging from insufficient numbers of personnel to the low quality of recruits. In fact its problems have been numerous, including difficulties in retaining recruits, disciplinary cases resulting from alcohol abuse, shortages of new military equipment and low training levels.²⁶

An important factor in undermining the capability of the Red Army to cope with the initial phase of *Barbarossa*, was the distinct lack of proper training in the pre-war years. There were no fully-fledged command and staff exercises conducted with front and Army headquarters. As a direct consequence, the General Staff and the Army went to war with insufficient training. Such lessons from military history are rarely far from the minds of the Russian military leadership. They are well schooled in the lessons of the Great Patriotic War; their failures during the war in Afghanistan; recent lessons drawn from their military operations in Chechnya. They are equally aware of the successes in the conduct of war by other states; the Gulf War in 1991; the NATO operation against Serbia in 1999; and no doubt the lessons of the conduct of the current 'War against Terrorism'. Kormil'tsev appreciates that it will take more than simply identifying theoretical lessons if reform is to succeed, appropriate practical measures must also be implemented. However implementing them in reality is an entirely different matter, as training and procurement policies costs money. The cost of getting the balance wrong in military training, has historically proven severe, both in human and economic terms.

The Financial Limitations on Reform

Putin hopes that by re-establishing the Ground Forces High Command, Kormil'tsev will work closely with Deputy Defence Minister Lubov Kudelina, in seeking to end the non-targeted use of government money.²⁷ Kudelina is also a relatively new appointment, a civilian professional economist with experience in both the USSR Ministry of Finance and its RF successor; she has been assigned the arduous task of getting a grip on spending and accounting within the MOD.

Despite the appointment of Kudelina, the problems associated with financing are proving almost insoluble. Promises that she has made concerning improved conditions for servicemen are being exposed to growing criticism. Kudelina has stated that in 2002 there will be a levelling out of the imbalances between servicemen's pay and that of civil servants. This would involve a salary increase of around 100%, aimed at alleviating the economic plight of junior officers in particular.²⁸ However, after allowing for the abolition of various financial privileges

The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

in July 2002, it is estimated that these increases will in fact not exceed 32.5%. And this figure does not allow for inflation or the increased expenditure on utilities that will result from the privilege changes in July 2002. Criticism of the inadequate level of pay increases for officers has become fierce. The redesigned system of financing the officer corps will primarily benefit younger officers, and may force experienced Lieutenant-Colonels and Colonels into early retirement. If it does have this effect, even inadvertently, the best-trained officers will be eviscerated from the military.²⁹

In late December 2001, the parameters of the defence budget for 2002 were discussed. According to Kormiltsev, the ground forces were allocated 28% of the total budget. Although he grumbled about its level, indulging in speculation on the future needs of the ground forces, which he believes merits 40-50% of the budget, he was quick to point out its implications. Procurement for the ground forces will not be markedly improved within the next decade; in which case other cost cutting schemes must be adopted to maintain, let alone improve, the combat effectiveness of the ground forces.³⁰

Expenditure on research and development, repairs and rearming will be increased by R27 billion. This figure falls far short of the actual needs of the military in renewing the combat equipment of the troops. Indeed, Kudelina has stated that the budget has been allocated in such a manner as to specifically target combat training and development; she puts the proportion allocated for this purpose at around 56% of the total defence budget.³¹

Added to these problems there is also the severe financial burden arising from the intention of professionalizing the uniformed armed forces over at least the next decade. Estimated costs in implementing this policy vary markedly, but there is near unanimous agreement that its total will be enormous. By enhancing salary payments alone, the financial strain would be great, however changes to the necessary infrastructure to support a professional army have been calculated at R360 million for one division. The burden on the state, if professionalizing the armed forces goes ahead, will be severe.³² But the money is simply not to be found in the treasury to support professionalizing, weapons procurement and salary increases: something will have to give way. Suggestions of how to offset the costs include further downsizing of the armed forces and covering the financial shortfall from the profits of the export of Russian military equipment overseas,³³ but these are unlikely to make much difference to the equation.

The current imbalance within the defence budget results in 70% spent on the maintenance of troops and 30% on development. According to Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov the eventual target is the achievement of a 50:50 split between upkeep and development. Figures released for 2001 indicate a level of progress towards that goal, as total spending on upkeep was reduced to 56%; Ivanov hailed this as a major achievement.³⁴ But it will take more than tightening the levels of spending in these areas to adequately address the ongoing problems of the military budget.

Successful military reform is dependent upon enhanced levels of targeted defence spending. Putin's policies for the reform of the military are undoubtedly ambitious, and unquestionably expensive. Professionalizing the armed forces over a decade or longer will entail substantial costs in salaries and measures aimed at underpinning a professional service. Equally, the re-creation of the Ground Forces High Command, whilst signalling an attempt to get to grips with military reform, will place further financial burdens upon the Russian State. The ground forces require

arms that the state is willing to provide but desperately unable to afford. Putin's armament programme for 2001-2010 is a case in point, as it seeks to supply the much needed military equipment, yet its R7,000 billion cost will be a severe burden. Putin's dilemma, as he seeks successful military reform, will be in squaring the circle; it is unclear at this stage if he has any answer to this predicament. Meanwhile, he must find a way out of the cycle of internecine squabbling and competition for scarce financial resources that has been the hallmark of military reform in recent years.

Conclusion

Putin has set the military on a path to reform that envisages the future creation of a professional army. He has already made structural changes and more will undoubtedly follow. Re-creating the Ground Forces High Command and setting the target of enhancing the combat readiness of the Armed Forces provides a means for the evaluation of the success of his reform programme. General Kormil'tsev will prove to be a pivotal figure in the fulfilment of that painstaking process. Nonetheless, key aspects of military reform are yet to be adequately addressed, including the optimum size of the armed forces, or whether Russia should seek parity with the US, or abandon its 'Great Power' aspirations. The talk of 'military reform' has a familiar resonance, but its achievement and actual targets are nebulous.

Kormil'tsev has shown great determination to carry forward the military reform of the ground forces with a practical effect. Aware of their historical role in the Russian Armed Forces, considering it as the backbone of the military strength of the Russian Federation, he will vigorously contend for more investment in the Ground Forces. The cost of the armaments programme for 2001-2010 does not inspire immediate confidence. In the meantime investment has to be made in renovating existing equipment, avoiding 'irrational duplication', managing the defence budget economically and eschewing the non-targeted use of money. These measures seem aimed at curbing further decline, rather than reversing the situation.

Kormil'tsev is no idealist however, proposing no easy solutions to remedy the very real problems that he has identified within the ground forces. Instead, his task of *stroitel'stvo* (development) is rooted in a reasoned assessment of the limitations of the resources of the Russian state. Improving the combat readiness of the ground troops will mean essentially prophylactic measures, making use of limited resources. Like Kvashnin, he recognises that given the likelihood of the continued under-financing of the Armed Forces what must be avoided at all costs is the 'irrational use of available resources'. Rather than holding out the traditional appeals for more defence spending and a larger slice of the cake for his branch of the Armed Forces, Kormil'tsev has announced that he will instead utilise existing equipment and weapons, renovating them and maintaining current levels, rather than witnessing further large-scale decline. His approach exposes the weaknesses in the argument advanced by many that without substantive increases in weapons procurement, military reform will be undermined. Equally, his role in the reform process is clear: stopping the rot. Yet the most difficult choices continue to be between prioritising salaries or equipment. He apparently takes a long-term view of the course of military reform for the ground troops, as demonstrated in his eagerness to address the failing educational system for both senior and junior officers alike. These reforms, if implemented, will only see rewards in the next

The Recreation of Russia's Ground Forces High Command: Prepared for Future War?

generation of officers. Yet they could prove to be a crucial element in effective military reform.

Kormil'tsev's target of reforming military education may do more in the long term to secure more effective ground forces in Russia than simply pursuing a policy of professionalizing the military. He considers the ground forces to be the backbone of the Russian Armed Forces, and he will be assessed in the future on the basis of whether he can succeed in keeping them centre stage in the process of military reform. At a political level, Putin has identified the shortcomings of the Russian military and clearly set out his plans to redress the balance. Kormil'tsev may have the determination and practical skills to achieve something relatively close to what Putin actually wants from within the military.

Platitudes in the discourse of Russian military reform come easily, though substantive progress has been largely absent; implementing the broad aims of Putin's plans for the ground forces will demand proper investment in manpower and equipment. Even if the armament programme can be realised in 2010, the pressures in the hiatus risk further decline in the condition and combat readiness of the ground forces. Money must not be wasted, as it often has been in the recent past, on the development of weapons that will never be used. Instead, funds must be channelled into more promising models. Russia's on-going military debacle in Chechnya illustrates the ineffectiveness of its conventional military and other armed forces in coping with its present internal security crisis. Furthermore, the challenges of modern warfare, with its reliance on high-technology equipment and weapons, are very different from the kind of large-scale mechanized war that Russia faced between 1941-45. Only time will tell whether Kormil'tsev has taken up a poisoned chalice in his new role, or if he will succeed in resolving the critical problems of the ground forces.

ENDNOTES

¹ I wish to thank Anne Aldis for her extensive comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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³ 'Geopolitics and Security: The Ground Troops in the RF Armed Forces Structure', *Vooruzheniye, Politika, Konversiya*, FBIS-0242, 1 August 2001, pp3-7.

⁴ A Kvashnin & M Gareyev, 'It's the Thought Process That First Went to War,' *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 May 2000. A detailed commentary on the article featured in S J Main, *It's the Thought Process That First Went to War': Marshal I Sergeyev, General A Kvashnin, and the Experience of World War II. A Commentary*, *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol 14, No 2, June 2001, pp49-70. Main's analysis supplies a significant insight into the issues raised in the article written by Kvashnin and Gareyev.

⁵ 'Russian Defence Minister Details Army Cuts, Says More Spent on Training', BBC Monitoring Service, 31 January 2002; B Talov, 'New Service Homes', *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, FBIS-0171, 4 May 2001, p4.

⁶ Yu D Bukreyev, 'Military Organisational Development: Prospects for Ground Troops under conditions of Military Reform', *Voyennaya Mysl'*, September-October 2001, pp2-6, FBIS-001, 21 October 2001.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ I would like to express my gratitude to Steven Main for drawing my attention to the importance of Kormil'tsev.

⁹ N Kormil'tsev, 'Armed Forces: Problems, Solutions: It is the Belief of Colonel-General Nikolai Kormil'tsev That Mother Infantry Will Still Serve Russia', *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, August 2001: FBIS-0382.

¹⁰ V Georgiyev, 'New People at the Ministry of Defence', *NG-Figury i Litsa* (Electronic Version), FBIS-0409, 17 May 2001.

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- 11 N Kormil'tsev, 'Mother Infantry Will Still Serve Russia', op cit.
- 12 'Russian Army Unhappy With Civilian in Charge as Problems Mount', *Versiya*, BBC Monitoring Service, 4 December 2001.
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- 14 Kormil'tsev has revealed a realistic assessment of the procurement of new weapons systems and hardware for the military. He does not envisage new weapons or hardware before 2010, based on the inability of the state to purchase and supply expensive equipment. Instead efforts will concentrate on the modernisation and repair of existing weapons and hardware. 'Russia's Ground Troops Not to Get New Weapons Soon', ITAR-TASS News Agency, BBC Monitoring Service, 26 December 2001.
- 15 N Kormil'tsev, 'Mother Infantry Will Still Serve Russia', op cit.
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