THE RUSSIAN MILITARY IN THE 21st CENTURY

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PART II

Russia's Future Defense Requirements.

Russia, quite obviously, needs a different military reform program if it is to provide for its security to 2010. Without going into much detail, it is clear that radical reductions in force, redeployments, and restructuring are needed in view of the current and probable future international security environment, projected contingencies, and the nation's economic challenges.

The European portion of the former Soviet Union, including Russia, where traditionally the largest concentrations of forces have been deployed, has to become our primary area for stationing reserves and storing supplies. This goes against the expediency of available infrastructure and traditional strategic priorities, but it fits within the parameters of the new strategic and political realities.

It is, in fact, up to Russia's political leaders to explicitly order the military not to plan for any large-scale conventional war with the United States, NATO, or Japan. The only exception should be to assure enough of a second strike nuclear capability, limited only by START treaties, to provide for deterrence. If NATO extends to the East, without finding accommodation with Russia's interests, a few "trip- wire" ground forces consisting of heavy divisions approximate to areas of potential tensions, as well as a limited, survivable, and flexible tactical nuclear force of 100-200 warheads, should be sufficient to deter any aggression from that direction.

Moreover, Russia does not need the 6,400 tanks and 2,450 aircraft apportioned to it under CFE nor does Ukraine need the 4,000 tanks and 1,000 aircraft apportioned to it. Neither faces an external threat from Europe, and they should not create the perception of a threat to one another. Russia could easily reduce its forces in this region to 500-800 aircraft and 1,000-2,000 tanks. The other former republics of the Soviet Union need to maintain even less robust forces.

NATO, for its part, should implement further cuts in armed forces in Europe; and the United States, whose superiority in tactical aircraft is of the greatest concern to the Russian military, should reduce aircraft inventories. Furthermore, it would be in everyone's best interest if the nations of the former Warsaw Pact would refrain from aligning themselves with NATO. The best hope for future peace in Eastern and Central Europe is for those nations to develop nonoffensive military capabilities, to pursue nonalignment, and to be open to good relations with Russia.

The primary new stationing areas for the Russian armed forces should be the North Caucasus, South Urals, and the Far East. This would correspond to the contingencies Russia has for Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China, and for countering the danger posed by the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism into the Muslim populations in its southern Volga regions. The defense of Russian territory and the ability to assist its allies among the former republics of the Soviet Union require neither massive nor

permanent deployments of Russian forces abroad or in the Far East. Forward deployed screening forces and a developed logistical infrastructure to include pre-positioned supplies to accommodate rapidly deployed reinforcing units would suffice.

The bulk of Russia's forces, structured for rapid deployment in a national emergency, would be permanently based in the Moscow, Urals, and Volga military districts, as presently planned. These forces should be fewer in number than currently envisioned and configured differently, but provided with better airlift and close air support assets. Instead of the 11 planned heavy and light divisions, this force could consist of no more than 1-2 heavy divisions and 2-3 light division equivalents. In addition, 2-3 division equivalents would be sufficient to provide a "trip-wire" near the western frontiers while 4-5 divisions might be stationed in the North Caucasus and the Transcaucasus. There needs to be at least one division in Central Asia, as well.

Due to the long lines of communications and their vulnerability, a somewhat larger group of forces eventually will need to be permanently deployed in the Transbaikal area and in the Far East. These will not number nearly as many as the 600 thousand troops deployed there in the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, some 5-7 heavy division equivalents would be sufficient, and would fit under the ceiling on deployments within a 100 kilometer border belt currently being negotiated between Moscow and Beijing.

To use the American way of formulating defense requirements, Russian conventional forces would be able to fight one major war and two half wars. This means that they may be called on to implement large-scale, theater-wide operations comparable to Operation Desert Shield/Storm in one region, such as the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, or the Far East, for which mobile forces would provide for rapid reinforcement from their bases in the Urals or in European Russia. These forces, including frontal aviation, would be assigned the mission of reinforcing Russian forces stationed at the Central Asia, Transbaikal, or Far East strategic regions. Simultaneously, they also would be able to help Russia's allied republics, primarily Armenia and Kazakhstan, to repel any aggression from across their borders. The same mobile forces also would be able to conduct two small-scale local military actions simultaneously wherever needed in or around Russia or as part of a multilateral U.N. peace-enforcement or peace-keeping operation.

In terms of numbers, Russian armed forces should number about 1-1.2 million active duty personnel by 1998. By 2001, a force of 800-900 thousand would seem to be a realistic and sound goal. By this date, Russia should have moved to an all volunteer force. This is actually possible since at present the uniformed personnel in the Russian armed forces are about 60-70 percent professional and 40-30 percent conscripted. This is due in part to a huge shortage of manpower and to the fact that most units are, indeed, undermanned. With the same expenditures on personnel as in 1997, Russia could maintain a force of 800 thousand fully- equipped and combat ready forces consisting only of professionals. The primary difficulty is how to get from where we are to where we ought to be, given current economic, social, and political challenges. This is the most difficult issue facing our military reform initiative.

The objective is to accelerate our reduction in forces to acquire a much smaller but better force over the next 5-10 years. We need to downsize to save resources while improving long neglected areas of support, maintenance, mobility, and housing. Russia also has to preserve the core of its existing military industrial complex so that the nation can be assured of the capability for meeting unpredictable and unforeseen challenges that may arise after the year 2000.

Releasing career officers to preserve the traditional force structure of remaining units is, for the initial 3-4 years, more expensive than keeping them in service. Keeping most of the officers on board while

sharply reducing the number of enlisted men in the armed forces, and slashing the number of conscripts, is a cost-cutting alternative, but it really doesn't save that much over a 3-4 year period. Furthermore, Russia would not be served well by armed forces top heavy in senior officers but lacking in junior officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel.

Such a major transformation requires a massive program to retrain officers for new positions in the military. This is easier than teaching them to become civilian employees, and, besides, we have a vast military education system already in place. This element of our military reform initiative will necessitate reshuffling human and material assets between the armed services, disbanding many units, and cutting the staffs of our central bureaucracy, as well as forming a relatively small number of highly professional, all-volunteer units as the core of a new Russian army. Meanwhile, Russia must preserve large stockpiles of weapons and equipment in secure storage to supply the newly organized units. Resources have to be provided to increase pay, allow for better housing, assure maintenance, and enhance training.

For the intermediate stage, in order to effect savings in personnel costs, Russia probably should have numerous cadre units and a small number of fully-complemented units. In the next stage, the ratio between cadre units and fully-complemented units would be slowly reversed. During this time, the savings could be applied to maintenance and to better training, weapons procurement, and research and development. This approach would, obviously, run counter to institutional interests and traditions. Only a determined and strong civilian leadership will be able to meet the monumental challenges of this new era.

Eventually, of the 800 thousand-soldier army, some 200 thousand could be allocated to strategic forces and C3I; 150 thousand soldiers would be committed to the Air/Air Defense forces, 150 thousand to the Navy, and 300 thousand to the Ground and Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF); plus another 100 thousand to central and local staffs, various administrative organizations, and the military education system.

In the new Russian Army, the Russian Air Force, after merging with the air forces of Air Defense, should acquire a much more prominent role in providing air defense in the European Russia and the Far East, as well as ground support and long-range interdiction for contingencies in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East. The new Russian Army will also depend on air assets for strategic and tactical mobility for the RDF. All this can be done with 1,000 to 1,500 combat and transport aircraft.

The role of the ground forces should be confined to preserving some forward positions with a screening force, rapid deployment, and reinforcement for large-scale, intensive, but relatively short duration commitments like Operation Desert Storm, or longer small-scale operations either in areas of specific interest or under U.N. authorization around the world. All in all, 15-17 heavy and 2-3 light division equivalents would be enough for these missions. In case of the emergence of a "greater than expected threat," reserves of former contract soldiers, personnel from other organizations like the Border Guards, and equipment and weapons from pre-positioned and prepared stocks could be matched to core cadre units which, in peacetime, are manned mostly by officers. These might be used to expand the Army by 100 percent over a few months time.

The Navy's mission should be basically defensive. The Northern Fleet should have the fleet ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) protection mission. The Pacific fleet will have the mission of protecting sea lines of communications and, with the Black Sea Fleet, will conduct relief operations and work in multinational operations under U.N. auspices. Even so, the Black Sea Fleet should be sharply reduced, and the Baltic Fleet may be virtually disbanded and turned into a shore patrol force. A total of 70-80 large combat ships, 40-50 attack submarines, and 200-300 shore-based naval aircraft would be adequate

for those missions.

Finally, Russian Strategic Forces, after the merging of land, sea, and air components, early warning and space systems under the Strategic Rocket Forces' operational command, should be designed to have a second-strike retaliatory capability sufficient for selective countervalue targeting against all relevant industrial targets or limited counterforce capabilities against the strategic forces of a third nuclear state. The command and control system must be improved and made more survivable and reliable as a matter of first priority, given the deep reductions in force levels and their alert status. Strategic Rocket Forces must have the capability to retarget quickly so that they can be viable against any existing nuclear power.

Existing military industrial mobilization assets are also "dead capital" in that they consume huge amounts of resources such as energy for heating and light and people for security. They need to be radically trimmed and turned over to the private sector. Our new doctrine and strategy should revolve around being ready to fight with weapons and equipment in service or in storage. The new Russian Army will be, very much, a "come to war as you are" kind of force. This should suffice for any localized or regional conflict. Should Russia become engaged in any other kind of war, it is quite likely that its industries would be attacked by conventional precision-guided weapons, therefore making it difficult to build up the arsenal after the war began. The only mobilization assets worth retaining are those for production of ammunition, fuel and spare parts, as well as those that support the repair and maintenance infrastructure.

Conclusions.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that Russia's defense requirements to 2010 envision an army that is very different from that of any present military power. Although Russia's resources, allocated to defense, are presently comparable to those of Germany or France, its present and projected geostrategic situation, as well as the existing armed forces and defense industrial infrastructure hardly permit any reduction of forces down to the level of those nations. Besides, the costs of reduction and conversion on that scale would be prohibitive.

Rather, the new Russian Army needs to be unique and innovative. It should be capable of taking its place among the armed forces of the nuclear superpowers in terms of its strategic forces and their capabilities, and doing so preferably within the framework of the START treaties. Its conventional forces will be far smaller than in the past but still somewhat larger than those of the most powerful European armies, while being structurally different. It will be uniquely Russia's Army, a force capable of defending the nation against plausible threats while fitting into Russia's new market economy and democratic political system.

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