



RUSSIAN FORCE GENERATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADAPTATIONS

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Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1 pm ET on June 25, 2025. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the next Russian Force Generation and Technological Adaptations Report.

Please note that the Russian Force Generation and Technological Adaptations Update will resume publishing the week of July 15.

Russia may have recently tested a new Iranian-made Shahed (Geran) drone with new precision capabilities, while likely simultaneously fielding new Russian-made radio-controlled Shahed drones. Ukrainian forces discovered Shahed drone debris on June 18 that had an advanced camera, a computing platform with artificial intelligence (AI)/machine learning (ML) capabilities, and a radio operation system that allows the drone operator to remotely operate the Shahed drone from Russia.[1] Ukrainian electronic and radio warfare expert Serhiy "Flash" Beskrestnov told the *Associated Press* that the new Shahed variants are white and have no markings or labels consistent with Russia-made drones, instead having stickers consistent with the standard Iranian labeling system. Drone experts told AP that Iran may have sold new Shahed variants to Russia for combat testing. Beskresnov also commented on the footage of a black Shahed drone with a radio-controlled camera striking a Ukrainian target in Kramatorsk on June 24.[2] Beskresnov noted that while this Shahed variant appears to be different from the white, possibly Iranian-made Shahed drone. Beskresnov noted that Ukrainian intelligence previously warned that Russia sought to integrate radio communications and cameras into a portion of Shaheds and argued that the Russian-made radio-controlled Shahed variants likely have "primitive" and cheap video and radio communications, whereas the Iranian-made drone likely had expensive components. Beskresnov added that the Russian-made Shaheds are still likely vulnerable to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW) due to their reliance on radio communications.

The Russian military also integrated thermal imaging cameras on some Shahed drones to improve Russian drone capabilities and strike precision. A Ukrainian military-analytical Telegram channel published footage on June 24 showing an intercepted Russian Shahed-136 drone that has a thermal camera.[3] The Telegram channel observed that thermal cameras allow Shahed-136 drones to better operate at night and in low visibility conditions; identify targets such as engines, generators, and thermal power plants; automate target identification if the drone has machine vision capabilities; and target homing in GPS jamming conditions. The Telegram channel added

that Shahed-136 drones can use thermal cameras to improve and correct the strike trajectory, home in on thermal signatures, and ignore decoys and targets with cold thermal signatures. The Telegram channel added that Shahed drones with thermal cameras can also adapt to the environment even if it does not have precise coordinates of the target, whereas Shaheds without thermal cameras operate blindly on GPS programs. Russian milbloggers amplified footage on June 19, reportedly showing a Shahed drone striking a target in Zaporizhzhia City, commenting that the strikes show that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) modified Shahed drones to not rely on geofence coordinates and granted the drones the ability to livestream the strike.[4]

Russian forces are reportedly using cheaply made drones, such as the Gerbera drone, to overwhelm Ukrainian air defense systems. A Kremlin-affiliated milblogger claimed on June 23 that Russian forces are using Gerbera drones to overwhelm Ukrainian air defense systems and described these drones as the lesser-known variant of a Shahed drone.[5] The milblogger claimed that Gerbera has a body composed of plywood, satellite navigation antennas, and a simpler design than the Shahed, which makes it cheaper to produce. Russian drone operators can use 3G and 4G mobile internet networks to fly the Gerbera drone, given that it has an onboard modem with a SIM card. The milblogger noted that some Gerbera drones have installed cameras to destroy moving targets and that Russian forces often use Gerbera drones as Shahed decoys.

Key Takeaways:

Russian Technological Adaptations

- **Russia may have recently tested a new Iranian-made Shahed (Geran) drone with new precision capabilities, while likely simultaneously fielding new Russian-made radio-controlled Shahed drones.**

Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts

- **The Russian State Duma is setting legal conditions to recruit stateless people into the Russian military and will likely use these conditions to illegally coerce Ukrainians and foreigners into military service.**

Force Retention

- **The Russian MoD is reportedly designing modified uniforms that would enable Russian commanders to commit wounded Russian servicemen to combat.**

Russian Force Centralization

- **The Russian State Duma adopted a bill that grants Russian commanders the ability to certify power of attorney over Russian volunteers, which will likely make it easier for the Russian MoD to deny compensation to Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine.**

Russian Military Reforms and Force Restructuring

- **Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov claimed that Russia will raise 13,000 officers in 2025, amidst reports that Russia's war in Ukraine is degrading Russia's officer corps and professionalism among officers.**

- **Russian commentators stated that a lack of equipment and financing is impeding Russia's efforts to prepare more specialized military personnel, which may inhibit Russia's reconstitution of a professional force.**

Integration of Veterans into Russian Society

- **The Kremlin continues to arrest Russian voices who are actively involved in searching for missing and deceased Russian servicemen, despite attempting to portray the Russian government as attentive to servicemen and their needs.**

Russian Defense Industrial Base

- **The Kremlin may be deprioritizing the aircraft industry in an effort to conserve funds for producing drones and weapons needed on the battlefield in Ukraine.**

Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Assessed Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization and undermining regime stability)

The Russian State Duma is setting legal conditions to recruit stateless people into the Russian military and will likely use these conditions to illegally coerce Ukrainians and foreigners into military service. The Russian State Duma adopted a bill on June 24 that allows stateless people (individuals without citizenship) and foreigners to sign contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) to serve in the Russian military or in "military formations." [6] The Russian State Duma added that the bill would allow the Russian MoD to recruit stateless people and foreigners until the end of Russia's wartime mobilization period or martial law. The bill's description notes that it aims to assist in "urgent" staffing of the Russian Armed Forces. [7] Russian State Duma Defense Committee Chairperson Andrei Kartapolov claimed on April 7 that the bill will primarily affect individuals deprived of Ukrainian citizenship or those living in occupied Ukraine who have not yet received Russian citizenship. [8] Kartapolov also claimed that many European residents who moved to Russia after being deprived of citizenship will also qualify for contract service. The Russian State Duma likely approved this bill in preparation for the Kremlin's efforts to stop recognizing Ukrainian citizenship documentation for people living in occupied Ukraine, and Ukrainian Luhansk Oblast Administration Head Oleksiy Kharchenko warned that Russian occupation officials are preparing to "mobilize" Ukrainian citizens in occupied Luhansk Oblast even if they do not have Russian passports under this bill. [9]

Russian Involuntary Military Service (Assessed Russian objective: Expand Russia's inactive reserve via conscription and enhance Russian administrative capacity regarding military mobilization)

The Russian State Duma increased fines for individuals who fail to update their military registration information, likely as part of the Kremlin's ongoing effort to improve Russia's draft capabilities. [10] The Russian State Duma adopted a bill increasing a fine from 5,000 rubles (\$64) to 10,000 to 20,000 rubles (\$127 to \$254) for any Russian military-aged man who fails to update their place of residence information with Russian military recruitment centers. [11] The bill's

explanatory note from the Russian State Duma states that the Russian MoD's data from 2023 indicates that Russian law enforcement found that over 47,000 Russians committed military registration violations and that 28,700 Russians were fined as punishment.

The Russian Government approved a bill proposal to remove citizenship from naturalized Russian citizens if they do not undergo mandatory military registration. Kartapolov introduced a bill on June 16 to the Russian State Duma that would authorize Russian officials to terminate Russian citizenship for naturalized Russian citizens who fail to fulfill their military registration obligations.[12] The Russian Government pointed to several legal problems with the bill despite its overall approval. The Russian Government stated that the bill fails to consider the citizenship of children of naturalized citizens subject to removal and that the Kremlin already determines the regulations for terminating acquired Russian citizenship.[13] Russian President Vladimir Putin on August 8, 2024, signed a law ordering the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) to provide information about naturalized citizens who were approved for Russian citizenship and to deprive them of acquired citizenship if they refused to register for military service.[14] The Russian MoD specified on December 27, 2024, that individuals who acquired Russian citizenship are subject to military registration and may lose their citizenship if they fail to appear at a military recruitment center within two weeks of acquiring citizenship or apply electronically through the Russian State Services (Gosuslugi) portal within one week.[15]

A Russian insider claimed that the Russian military command failed to effectively conduct an involuntary reserve call-up in September 2022 due to the ineffectiveness of Russian military recruitment centers. A Russian insider source claimed on June 17 that the September 2022 call-up failed because Russian commanders on the ground did not control the military registration specialties (designations that indicate the military skill of those registered for military service), leading to problems where personnel received assignments not related to their specialties.[16] The insider source claimed, for example, that military intelligence officers commanded tank companies and air defenders fought in assault units. The insider source blamed Director of the Main Organizational-Mobilizational Directorate of the Russian General Staff Colonel General Yevgeny Burdinsky for creating these problems during the 2022 call-up. The source also blamed First Deputy Head of the Russian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GRU) Lieutenant General Vladimir Alekseyev for proposing an ineffective solution based on the GRU-managed "Redut" private military company (PMC) in which the Russian military command quickly assembled a corps whose units would operate across the entire theater. The insider source proposed that the Russian military bring back cadre units (understaffed units that retain a nearly full complement of officers and many non-commissioned officers along with a small number of soldiers). The insider source argued that the return to the cadre system would allow wounded veterans to continue serving in the military and simplify the process of training and attaching mobilized personnel, instead of creating new units. The source also called for the Russian military command to enlarge and staff battalions to peacetime cadre unit staffing levels similar to the "BARS" (Russian Combat Army Reserve) system, in which active reservists form the basis of border guard units, freeing up regular units to engage in combat on the front. The source claimed that a system of cadre units would allow Russia to significantly increase the military's numerical strength in a short period of time. The source also called

for the Russian military command to create a fund to buy weapons and equipment for the BARS system after the end of the war in Ukraine. Russian and Soviet doctrine and strategy previously required large-scale reserve mobilization to fill out cadre units in wartime, but the 2008 military reforms under then-Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov moved the Russian military away from a cadre-and-reserve approach to a professional model.[17]

Force Retention (Assessed Russian objective: Set conditions that would allow the Russian military to retain its mobilized personnel, contract soldiers, and irregular forces over the long term)

The Russian MoD is reportedly designing modified uniforms that would enable Russian commanders to commit wounded Russian servicemen to combat. Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anna Tsivileva claimed on June 18 at the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) that 60 percent of wounded or disabled Russian servicemen want to continue military service and remain employed within the Russian MoD.[18] Tsivileva claimed that the Russian MoD has already developed 50 sets of military uniforms and shoes for wounded and disabled servicemen. The Russian military command has been increasingly redeploying wounded personnel to the frontlines in Ukraine in an effort to address Russian manpower issues, and the MoD may use the supposed demand for new uniforms for wounded servicemembers to explain Russia's increasing reliance on wounded and disabled Russian troops in combat.[19]

A Kremlin insider source reported that the Kremlin is preventing employees of the Federal Protective Service (also known as the Federal Guard Service [FSG]) from resigning due to Russia's war in Ukraine. The insider source claimed that the FSG is banning civilian employees from quitting or retiring, despite the fact that FSG civilian employees are not subject to the Russian 2022 partial mobilization order.[20] The FSG provides protection to high-ranking Russian government officials. The Kremlin may be trying to retain FSG personnel for a protracted period to protect the regime amidst Russia's war effort in Ukraine.

A Russian milblogger argued that the Kremlin's decision not to launch a general involuntary reserve call-up in 2022 is degrading Russia's efforts to retain forces on the battlefield. The milblogger claimed that the Russian MoD should have been conducting waves of mobilization everyone and 1.5 years to allow the Russian military to replenish its mobilization reserve and prevent the moral and physical exhaustion of military personnel.[21] The milblogger also claimed that the lack of clear terms of service for mobilized soldiers will lead to fewer soldiers returning to the mobile reserve and increased desertions, and ISW reported in recently leaked Russian databases revealing nearly 50,000 cases of desertion between early 2022 and late 2024.[22] The milblogger also claimed that the Russian MoD's refusal to replace mobilized soldiers negatively affected 1.5 million soldiers' and family members' perception of the Russian government.[23]

Russian Force Centralization (Assessed Russian objective: Centralize the state's control over informal volunteer-based units that emerged in early 2022 after the Kremlin failed to declare general mobilization)

The Russian government extended a one-time compensation to disabled servicemen who fought in the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics' (DNR and LNR) militia since 2014 and provided combat veteran statuses to servicemen who fought in occupied Ukraine. Both provisions are part of the Kremlin's ongoing force centralization effort. The Russian Government approved a procedure on June 14 for distributing one-time payments to DNR and LNR servicemen who became disabled in combat in May 2014.[24] Putin signed a decree on March 10 providing one-time payments to DNR and LNR servicemen in amounts ranging from 4.4 million rubles (\$56,056) to 6.05 million rubles (\$77,077), depending on disability severity.[25] The Russian State Duma adopted an amendment granting combat veteran status to servicemen who fought in occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhia oblasts since Russia's illegal annexation of these regions in September 2022.[26] The amendment states that servicemen who operated in occupied Ukraine for at least six months or had a valid early leave from the frontlines qualify for combat veteran status.

The Russian State Duma adopted a bill that grants Russian commanders the ability to certify the power of attorney over Russian volunteers, which will likely make it easier for the Russian MoD to deny compensation to Russian servicemen fighting in Ukraine. Duma Defense Committee First Deputy Chairperson Andrei Krasov claimed on June 18 that the bill allows Russian commanders to certify wills for Russian volunteers and allows their families to receive cash payments, apply for benefits, and obtain death certificates.[27] Krasov stated that the Russian State Duma previously allowed Russian military commanders to certify certificates and wills for Russian servicemen fighting as part of the Russian Armed Forces. Putin previously made it harder for Russian servicemen to obtain compensation for injuries in November 2024. A Russian milblogger claimed in November 2024 that Russian military medical commissions became increasingly selective in diagnosing Russian servicemembers with injuries in an effort to deny compensation to injured servicemembers.[28] The Russian MoD announced an initiative on April 8 to establish mobile medical commissions to examine wounded Russian servicemembers in frontline positions and to identify servicemembers requiring treatment and rehabilitation, likely in order to limit the number of future Russian veterans qualifying for state support.[29]

The Republic of Bashkortostan introduced the first regional compensation to milbloggers covering Russia's war in Ukraine, likely in support of the Kremlin's effort to coopt Russian milbloggers. Local outlet *RBK Ufa* reported on June 24 that the Republic of Bashkortostan deputies adopted a law providing state benefits to Russian media specialists covering the Russian war effort in Ukraine.[30] The law specifies conditions for one to receive the status of combat journalist, media worker, or journalism veteran that will allow the Republic of Bashkortostan to determine the state compensation for milbloggers and war correspondents (*voyenkory*). *RBK Ufa* reported that this law will introduce an additional 8.9 million rubles (\$113,000) in regional expenses, of which 5.5 million (\$70,000) are reserved for payouts to families of deceased milbloggers and *voyenkory*. The Republic of Bashkortostan is the first Russian federal subject to offer compensation to milbloggers. This new policy is likely part of the Kremlin's efforts to coopt milbloggers via financial and administrative measures.

Russian Military Reforms and Force Restructuring (Assessed Russian objective: Restructure the Russian military to maintain the war in Ukraine while preparing for a potential large-scale conventional war with NATO)

Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov claimed that Russia will raise 13,000 officers in 2025, amidst reports that Russia's war in Ukraine is degrading Russia's officer corps and professionalism among officers.[31] Belousov stated at the meeting with military school graduates on June 23 that 13,000 Russian officers underwent training in 39 Russian military schools and boasted about the professionalism of the Russian officer corps. Belousov stated that Russia's combat experience in Ukraine is a key advantage for the Russian Armed Forces and that it is important for new officers to save this experience for the next generation of Russian officers. Belousov also claimed that the requirements for Russian officers have since increased, as it is important for officers to become combat leaders. Belousov did not acknowledge the growing problem of the Russian Armed Forces immediately deploying newly graduated officers to combat operations without undergoing mandatory six-month leadership training prior to the deployment, however. Russian Airborne (VDV) Commander Colonel General Mikhail Teplinsky implied in a speech to graduates in December 2023 that the Russian military command is deploying new VDV officers directly to the frontlines upon their graduation without having them complete pre-combat training.[32] A Russian insider source who previously published accurate information about the Russian MoD similarly stated on June 23 that the Russian military command randomly appoints officers to command combat units upon graduation, which is degrading Russia's military education system.[33] The insider source even compared Russian military schools to "Potemkin villages" - an expression referring to the purported construction of fake settlements by a historical Russian minister to hide the true state of the Empire from the Tsar. The insider source argued that the Russian MoD's prioritization of having officers command combat units is creating a shortage of truly experienced military commanders who rise through the ranks on the battlefield. The insider source argued that the Kremlin needs to shorten the number of lecture hours and noted that current Russian officers who have already undergone a shortened curriculum.

Russian commentators stated that a lack of equipment and financing is impeding Russia's efforts to prepare more specialized military personnel, which may inhibit Russia's reconstitution of a professional force. The head of an unspecified military-patriotic club published an account of his visits to military education facilities in the Siberian Federal Okrug.[34] The head noted that Russia currently trains prospective officers in "Suvorov" cadet schools; high schoolers via the regional "Avangard" centers that conduct military drills; and college students at the university military departments.[35] The head noted that "Suvorov" cadet schools — which prepare cadets for admission into officer schools — have surface-level programs; unnecessary Russian aircraft flight simulators; and an unmanned aerial systems (UAVs) operations group without real UAVs. The head noted that "Suvorov" students lack field uniforms, which impedes them from participating in fire, field, and tactical exercises. The head added that there were 60 students in the "Suvorov" school that he inspected and that the school only had five outdated Kalashnikov rifles. The head noted that the "Avangard" regional center that he inspected receives funding of approximately 52 million rubles (\$660,790) per year and uses training grounds belonging to a local

"Patriot" military center.[36] This "Avangard" center trains around 2,000 school, lyceum, and technical school students throughout the year. The head complained that this "Avangard" center refuses to let women undergo the basic medical training program, despite the high demand among teenage Russian women. The head observed that the "Avangard" facilities that he inspected lack enough space to have participants train at an appropriate distance and noted that such training only conditions students to move in columns. The head noted that the "Avangard" center taught students outdated and wrong concealment tactics; did not teach students how to assemble and disassemble rifles; and lacked UAVs, simulators, and protective gear for the students. The head complained that trainers of the "Avangard" center lacked combat experience and that the Russian Ministry of Education developed the curriculum. The head noted that the Russian MoD sponsors the military department in a local university that he inspected via the federal budget and that the department trains motorized rifle squad commanders and senior riflemen. The head noted that the department lacks fully functional armored vehicles and simulators, resulting in students not having any practice with using combat vehicles. The head noted that the department teaches outdated tactics, such as operating in uncovered trenches that are not protected from drones.

A Russian insider source argued that Russia needs to update staffing mechanisms for Russian Spetsnaz units. The insider source claimed on June 16 that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated that Russian Spetsnaz forces are highly efficient in combat, but claimed that Spetsnaz units' outdated staffing mechanisms are forcing Spetsnaz soldiers to take on multiple roles at once on the battlefield.[37] The insider source called for the Russian military command to reform the Spetsnaz company staffing structure so that company commanders have several assistants who can handle bureaucratic "red tape;" company technicians who are responsible for maintaining the unit's equipment, including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and motorboats; sniper groups; two drone groups and two reconnaissance groups; more types of machine guns for different conditions; and radio operators. The insider source also called for the Russian military command to train Spetsnaz units to conduct parachute-less heliborne landings and to drive buggies, ATVs, motorcycles, and heavy-wheeled vehicles. The insider source called on Russia to increase the quality of reinforcements who arrive at Spetsnaz units, including by establishing training support battalions that help select new personnel, oversee their training, and work to update training based on battlefield experience.[38] The Russian MoD notably recently posted footage of Russian VDV forces practicing offensive and defensive tactics on motorcycles, and the Russian military command has reportedly developed a series of standards in equipping frontline units with motorcycles, ATVs, and buggies.[39]

Integration of Veterans into Russian Society (Assessed Russian objective: Mitigate the risk of veterans emerging as a political group in a way that could erode the stability of the Russian state)

Russian federal subjects continue preparing veterans to assume government positions in municipal and regional government via the "Time of Heroes" regional branches. A local Chelyabinsk Oblast news outlet reported on June 17 that Chelyabinsk officials selected 66 Russian veterans into a regional "Heroes of the South Ural" branch of the all-Russian "Time of Heroes" program aimed at preparing Russian veterans for local positions of power.[40] Chelyabinsk Oblast Deputy Governor Roman

Vollert stated that the training of program participants will begin on July 1. Vollert added that an additional 19 veterans will join the program reserve and will be eligible to participate in the second wave of the “Heroes of the South Ural” program, bypassing the selection process. A local Republic of Udmurtia news outlet reported on June 11, citing the Udmurtia government press service, that 50 Russian war veterans won the regional “SVOi Reserve18” (“SVO” — the Kremlin’s term for its 2022 invasion of Ukraine) program and will undergo a year-long professional training at the Higher School of Public Administration starting on June 16.[41] A local Republic of Bashkortostan news outlet reported on May 21 that Bashkir officials selected 70 finalists for the “Heroes of Bashkortostan” program out of 1,630 applicants.[42] The director of the “Batyrlar. Heroes of Tatarstan” program, Igor Privalov, stated that the Republic of Tatarstan officials will select 60 Russian veterans out of 1,600 applicants from the program's cohort to undergo professional training in public administration. [43] The Republic of Mari-El's "Heroes of Mari El. Taleshke-vlak" and the Republic of Mordovia's "Heroes Among Their Own" programs finished selecting candidates on June 20, and the Republic of Chuvashia's "Time of SVOikh" will train the 50 selected participants in July.[44]

The Kremlin continues to arrest Russian voices who are actively involved in searching for missing and deceased Russian servicemen, despite attempting to portray the Russian government as attentive to servicemen and their needs. Russian authorities arrested Mikhail Polynkov, the administrator of the “Soldatskaya Pravda” Telegram channel, on June 18 for allegedly abandoning his military unit.[45] The Russian Strelkov Movement (which advocates for the release of imprisoned former officer and ardent ultranationalist Igor Girkin) claimed that the arrest was actually due to Polynkov’s efforts to find missing in action (MIA) Russian servicemen, suggesting that Russian authorities detained Polynkov over concerns that he would expose the scale of Russian losses.[46] A Russian milblogger responded to the arrest on June 19, claiming that there is a public demand to find MIA soldiers and that existing government means do not fully satisfy the growing demand.[47] The Kremlin will most likely continue efforts to silence milbloggers and Russian commanders who reveal problems affecting Russian soldiers on the frontline in order to maintain control over Russian civil society.[48] Putin continued to portray himself as an effective and involved wartime leader who prioritized servicemen and veterans during his meeting with Russian Human Rights Ombudsman Tatyana Moskalkova on June 24.[49]

Russian officials continue to offer veterans and their families financial and social benefits to mitigate the risk of a veteran-based civil society from emerging amidst increasing reports about Russia failing to integrate Russian veterans into society. Russian Transportation Minister Roman Starovoyt announced on June 17 that Russian authorities will begin to offer online discounts for train and plane tickets for Russian war participants and their relatives by the end of 2025.[50] The Republic of Tatarstan local outlet *Biznes Online* reported on June 18 that the Russian Chairman of the Social Fund Sergei Chirkov signed an order to build a rehabilitation center for Russian war veterans in Bulguma, Republic of Tatarstan.[51] Russian opposition outlet *Verstka* reported that Russian state TV channel *Pervyi Kanal* launched a new show on June 15 that helps veterans find jobs in Russia, and that Putin's daughter's friend Nataliya Popova is the host of the show.[52] The show featured several veterans who complained about struggles finding employment after their return from the

frontlines. A Russian milblogger complained that Russia still fails to provide necessary medical and psychological support to Russian veterans and warned that the Kremlin needs to prepare for an increase in crime perpetrated by returning Russian veterans.[53] Another Russian milblogger implied that the Kremlin is introducing veteran resocialization efforts on paper but not in practice, risking destabilizing Russian society.[54]

Militarization of Society and Youth: (Assessed Russian objective: Condition Russian society and youth for military service and raise societal support for Russian war efforts)

The Kremlin reportedly increased spending on military-patriotic youth education 13-fold over the past three years, likely in an effort to indoctrinate the youth into supporting Russia's long-term war efforts in Ukraine and a possible confrontation against NATO. Russian investigative outlet *Novaya Gazeta* reported on June 18 that Russia increased spending on youth patriotic education programs from 11.4 billion rubles (about \$145 million) in 2022 to a planned 66.6 billion rubles (about \$849 million) for 2025.[55] *Novaya Gazeta* reported that the Kremlin increased the number of regional youth patriotic forums from 74 in 2022 to 157 in 2024 and the number of patriotic gatherings, competitions, and festivals from 514 in 2023 to 905 in 2024.

The Kremlin is trying to lower age restrictions for drone racing in an effort to teach more children to operate drones. Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered on June 16 for the Russian "Movement of the First" youth program's council to introduce sports titles and ranks in drone racing and proposed to reduce the minimum age from 10 to seven years of age for drone racing championships in 2026.[56] The Russian Drone Racing Federation and the "Movement of the First" will jointly host this drone-piloting championship in 2026 at the federal budget's expense.[57]

The Republic of Chechnya introduced a new "Time of Young Heroes" youth program as part of the wider campaign to indoctrinate and prepare young Russians for the Kremlin's war efforts. Chechen Republic Head Ramzan Kadyrov reported on June 17 that Chechnya held the first military-patriotic "Time of Young Heroes" session at the regional branch of the military-sports training center "VOIN" ("Warrior") at the Vladimir Putin Spetsnaz University.[58] Kadyrov claimed that 300 Russian teenagers ages 14 to 17 learned basic firearm skills and underwent sniper, engineering, drone control, tactical medicine, and topography training as part of the program. Kadyrov claimed that teenagers also participated in the "Zarnitsa" military-sports competition during which Russian teenagers learned how to give first aid to wounded soldiers, throw grenades, assemble weapons, and shoot firearms.

Russian Discipline Problems (Russian discipline and morale issues that degrade Russian force effectiveness)

Putin recently signed a decree allowing military commanders and military police chiefs to directly administer disciplinary arrests of Russian servicemen without a judge's order. Russian news wire TASS obtained a decree document on June 24, which states that military unit commanders, military police chiefs, or garrison chiefs can conduct disciplinary arrests of Russian servicemen who committed

serious disciplinary offenses on the frontlines in Ukraine.[59] TASS noted that previous Russian Armed Forces disciplinary regulations required a garrison military court judge to impose disciplinary arrests. The decree also specified conditions for lifting the disciplinary arrests for servicemen who have not committed additional disciplinary offenses. The decree noted that military commanders can release servicemen and sailors no earlier than after three months of disciplinary arrest; sergeants and junior officers no earlier than six months; and officers and midshipmen no earlier than after a year.

Russian Defense Industrial Base (Assessed Russian objective: Increase Russia's defense industrial base production to support Russian war efforts)

Head of the Russian state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec, Sergey Chemezov, claimed that the Russian defense industrial base (DIB) continues to grow despite mounting Western sanctions against Russia. Chemezov met with Putin on June 17 and reported on the results of Rostec's production in 2024, including the implementation of Russian state orders, military equipment modernization, and the development of airspace control and electronic warfare (EW) systems.[60] Chemezov claimed that Rostec's revenue increased by 27 percent in 2024 compared to 2023 and reached 3.61 trillion rubles (roughly \$46 billion). Chemezov claimed that Rostec's investments hit 676 billion rubles (\$8.6 billion) in 2024 due to the growth of the number of Russian state defense orders and DIB expansion. Chemezov claimed that Rostec is currently producing 80 percent of all military equipment that the Russian military uses against Ukraine. Chemezov claimed that Rostec increased the production of new lightly armored vehicles and tanks by 1.1 times; ammunition for tube artillery by 1.3 times; ammunition for lightly armored vehicles and tanks by 2.1 times; and rockets for the multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) by 1.7 times in 2024. Chemezov claimed that Rostec's production of military equipment has grown tenfold since 2021. Chemezov also claimed that Rostec modernized the Russian air defense system Pantsir SMD-E to increase the system's capacity to carry 48 surface-to-air (SAM) missiles and protect against Ukrainian drones. Chemezov also claimed that Rostec developed a new Serp-VS13D EW system that is reportedly capable of detecting and suppressing first-person-view (FPV) drones and drones that operate on wider frequency ranges. Chemezov claimed that Rostec employs 700,000 specialists and that Rostec's staff has grown by more than 100,000 people since 2022 and will likely continue to grow by an additional 100,000 workers and plans to hire 130,000 workers (including 30,000 engineers) by 2028. Chemezov did not specify how Rostec plans to increase its workforce in conditions of intensifying labor shortages in Russia.[61]

The Kremlin may be deprioritizing the aircraft industry in an effort to conserve funds for producing drones and weapons needed on the battlefield in Ukraine. RBK reported on June 19 that the head of the Russian state United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) Vadim Badekha claimed that the UAC plans to lay off 1,500 managerial staff as part of a "program to optimize the number of management personnel" in Moscow and that the layoffs would not affect the aircraft design bureaus.[62] French outlet CNEWS reported on June 24 that Russian electronics manufacturer Optron-Stavropol is on the verge of bankruptcy and has slowed down its operations since March 2025 after sustaining significant revenue losses and being unable to pay off debt.[63] Russia uses Optron-Stavropol's power semiconductors in aircraft power supply for MiG, Tu, Su, Sukhoi Superjet, and MS-21 aircraft. Optron-Stavropol CEO Pavel Bondarenko

attributed the critical financial situation to the Russian military establishing low prices on military equipment, which resulted in producers losing profit. Bondarenko added that Optron-Stavropol had to lay off personnel after suffering revenue losses of 102 million rubles (\$1.3 million) in 2023 and 149 million rubles (\$1.9 million) in 2024.

The Kremlin is setting information conditions to centralize control over Russia's volunteer-driven military-industrial sector. The Head of the Russian Presidential Directorate for Defense Industry State Policy, Viktor Yevtukhov, told TASS on the sidelines of the SPIEF on June 21 that the "people's defense industry" will be more effective if integrated into the defense and security system. Yevtukhov's mention of the "people's defense industry" likely refers to small companies and volunteer organizations that develop and produce military equipment. Yevtukhov claimed that civilian engineering teams do not have the same experience interacting with Russia's military procurement system, which is a mandatory requirement for scaling production. Yevtukhov advocated for further integration of civilian-military production centers with the Russian DIB, claiming that such efforts would allow Russia to scale the production of UAVs, unmanned surface vehicles (USV), tactical aircraft, and necessary drone and military equipment components. Yevtukhov stated that the Russian Presidential Administration introduced numerous mechanisms to integrate smaller companies into the Kremlin's "People's Defense Industry Complex." ISW previously reported on the Kremlin's efforts to centralize control over Russian production and procurement companies and assessed that the Kremlin may harm its innovation and development cycles if it does not implement necessary reforms to its DIB, such as adopting anti-corruption measures.[64]

Russian Technological Adaptations (Assessed Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Russia reportedly instituted experimental legal frameworks to test a heavy helicopter-type UAV. A Russian milblogger claimed on June 19 that researchers at the Ushkuynik research and production center in Novgorod Oblast conducted the first known flight test of a heavy helicopter-type drone, which Russian officials authorized via an experimental legal regime.[65] The milblogger noted that the Ushkuynik center is known for developing the Prince Vandal Novgorodsky fiber-optic strike drone and that the center is becoming a hub for the centralization and development of unmanned aerial systems.

Joint Military Exercises (Russian objective: Improve interoperability among Russia and its allies and partners, expand Russia's global military influence, and support Russia's information operations about Russia's conventional military capabilities)

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) reported that 600 Chinese servicemen will undergo training and internships at Russian military bases and centers in 2025.[66] The GUR told the Ukrainian outlet *Kyiv Post* that the Kremlin approved a decree allowing Chinese servicemen to gain combat experience from the Russian military and learn how to resist Western-made military equipment. The GUR added that the Russian military will focus on training Chinese tankers, artillerymen, engineers, and air defense specialists.

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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