



Maneuverable Defense and Initiative at the Tactical Level in Russian Military Training

OE Watch Commentary: Russian military exercises of all types are regularly reported in the Russian military newspaper *Red Star*. As noted in the accompanying article, countering “superior enemy forces” with “maneuverable defense” was featured during recent battalion level maneuvers at the Yurginsky training facility in the Kemerovo Region (Central Military District).

One of the main purposes of the training was “to once again decide on common approaches for introducing forms and methods of training troops.” This reference to forms and methods is a professional term of Russian military science that indicates what Western observers understand as operational doctrine for the force. During the exercise, units were described as maneuvering rapidly and frequently from position to position, while being able to inflict damage and avoid entrapment.



Units of a separate motorized rifle brigade of the Western Military District (ZVO), stationed in the Polar Region, work on maintaining tactical maneuvering defenses.

Source: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11345675@egNews, CC BY SA 4.0

A featured event described how, during the difficult live-fire part of maneuver training, deviations from the training scenario and “bold and non-standard decisions” were made and executed. The article went on to explain that this was necessitated because of the complexities injected by the attachment of other units during the live-fire. In the Russian tactical orders process, the staff provides the expertise in conveying the commander’s plan, not providing the commander with a plan and courses of actions, such as in US and NATO operational art.

The training emphasis on flexibility while combining units with different commanders and still providing common tactical consistency in drills to validate the operational “forms and methods” gives context to the kind of initiative that the Russian military wants to build. Still, this sort of training initiative indicates a higher level of professional expectation and performance at the tactical command and staff level, and it results in more agility with battle drills. It is not the sort of development of mission command that leads to the broad-based initiative that is a characteristic of Western forces. In this vein, it is also worth mentioning that all of the approximately 2000 participants were professionals and not conscripts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)**

“This [training] requires not only tactical knowledge but also bold and non-standard decisions.”

Source: Тарас Рудык, “Испытание манёвренной обороной (Test of maneuverable defense),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 March 2019. <http://redstar.ru/ispytanie-manyovrennoj-oboronoj/>

...there were several goals during the battalion training exercise: to check the combat readiness of the brigade units, to give their commanders practice in deploying their units, and to improve coordination among the units in defensive and offensive engagements as well as improving the skills of commanders in managing their subordinate units and attached units in difficult battlefield situations.