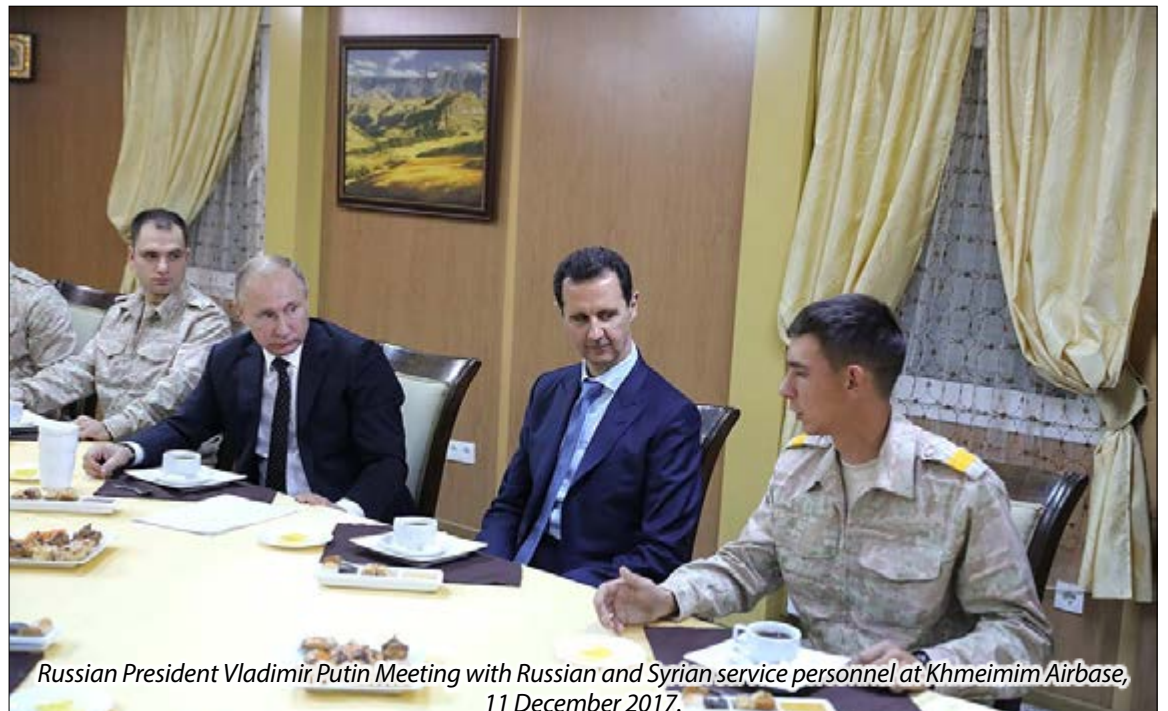




Syrian Combat Experience in the Aerospace Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses the number of Aerospace Forces (VKS) personnel that have been deployed to Syria. According to Russian Defense Minister, General of the Army Sergey Shoygu, 98% of transport aviation crews, 90% of the operational-tactical and army aviation crews, 60% of long-range aviation crews, and 32% of VKS air defense personnel have deployed in support of the Syrian campaign. This high-level of participation in the Syrian campaign can be seen at similar levels in the Ground Forces, especially the general officer corps, as Syria appears to be important for advancement in the Russian Armed Forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Russian President Vladimir Putin Meeting with Russian and Syrian service personnel at Khmeimim Airbase, 11 December 2017.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56357>, CC BY SA 4.0

“98 percent of the transport aviation crews, 90 percent of operational-tactical and army aviation crews, and 60 percent of the long-range aviation pilots have already participated in [Syria].”

Source: Dmitriy Semenov, “Под руководством главы военного ведомства генерала армии Сергея Шойгу прошло очередное заседание Коллегии Минобороны России (The Latest Russian Ministry of Defense Collegium Session Took Place Under the Direction of Military Department Head General of the Army Sergey Shoygu),” *Krasnaya Zvezda* Online, 21 June 2019, <http://redstar.ru/strogo-sootvetstvovat-zadannym-parametram/>

The RF Defense Minister pointed out that at that time, the Head of State ordered them to actively improve the combat capabilities of this branch of the Armed Forces and to increase the personnel’s training level. Sergey Shoygu stressed that the employment of the Russian VKS during the course of the conduct of the special operation on Syrian territory immeasurably contributes to the practical realization of this task.

The figures speak for themselves here: 98 percent of the transport aviation crews and 90 percent of operational-tactical and army aviation crews, and also 60 percent of the long-range aviation pilots have already participated in the previously mentioned operations. Furthermore, nearly one-third of the air defense specialists – 32 percent of the servicemen – have confirmed their mastery and professionalism during the course of the fulfillment of missions in Syria.

The results of the renewal of the VKS organization-staff structure and their technical improvement are also becoming visible. The Russian Defense Minister reported that 37 organizational events have been conducted and 20 military units and subunits have been formed in the Aerospace Forces during the last year and a half. During the last year and a half, the Russian VKS has received more than 250 pieces of new and modernized equipment, which has made possible the reequipping of nine aviation and air defense missile regiments. Large-scale renewal will continue in this branch of the Armed Forces for the foreseeable future...by way of illustration – are the completion of the construction of no fewer than 700 buildings and structures of Russian VKS military infrastructure facilities, and also the delivery to the formations and military units of 205 pieces of new equipment according to the plan for the realization of the State Armaments Program for the current year. “So, the percentage of state-of-the-art weapons will be brought up to 82 percent by the end of the year”, the Russian Defense Minister stressed, having added that this result “meets the given parameters”.

As before, equipping the troops with advanced air defense and missile defense systems also remains among the main directions of the VKS’s development. The Military Department Head also focused the attention of the participants of the Russian Ministry of Defense Collegium on this, having cited the specific results of the work, which is being conducted in this direction...