



Aerospace Forces to Form Mobile Reserve Regiments for Air Defense

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses Russian plans to put a high mobility air defense regiment in each of the Aerospace Forces' Air and Defense Armies. Russia has one of these armies in each of its five military districts. These regiments are intended to be a mobile reserve that can rapidly be deployed to defend hostile air corridors. The concept of a mobile reserve for air defense has been around since the early 1990s. The first such formation was the 14th Mobile Air Defense Division, consisting of nine battalions of S-300PS (SA-10B/ Grumble B) surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems. The unit was first based in the Baltics, then relocated to the Moscow region, and later disbanded. Another such unit, the 1721st SAM Regiment armed with Pantsir-Ss and Buk-M2s was stood up in 2013 to provide support for the 2014 Winter Olympics, but was disbanded afterwards. The current implementation of the concept is based on Russia's Syria experience, as explained by *Izvestiya*.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)



Russian Aerospace Forces Emblem.

Source: Russian government, Ministry of Defence Medium emblem of the Военно-воздушные силы Российской Федерации.svg: F l a n k e rEight-pointed star 16 radial lines. svg: AnonMoosDerivative work: Serhio Magpie via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_aerospace_forces_emblem.svg, Public domain

“A mobile reserve consisting of an air defense regiment will appear in each Air and Air Defense Army.”

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, “В засадном положении: Минобороны создает мобильные резервные части ПВО Специальные полки усилят противовоздушную оборону на опасных направлениях (In an Ambush Position: Defense Ministry Is Establishing Mobile Reserve Air Defense Units: Special Regiments Will Reinforce Air Defense on Threat Axes),” *Izvestiya* Online, 2 July 2019. <https://iz.ru/892760/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/v-zasadnom-polozhenii-minoborony-sozdaet-mobilnye-rezervnye-chasti-pvo>

Serious reform awaits the national air defense system. A mobile reserve consisting of an air defense regiment will appear in each Air and Air Defense Army. These units, activated from scratch, will receive Pantsir air defense missile-gun complexes in the inventory, Izvestiya was told by Defense Ministry sources. It is planned that the new regiments will cover important strategic facilities and will reinforce already deployed air defense subunits. A SAM regiment of the mobile reserve will be established in the Aerospace Forces (VKS) structure before the end of 2019. Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu recently announced the appearance of the first such unit...

The mobile reserve units will fill voids in the defense and will operate from ambushes, Lieutenant General (Reserve) Aytech Bizhev, former Air Force deputy commander-in-chief for the Joint Air Defense System of CIS countries, explained to Izvestiya.

“Relying on intelligence, the command element must determine the threat level and assign missions to mobile air defense units in advance,” he said. “A number of positions will be prepared in peacetime: alternate sites will be established for launchers on several axes -- this will speed up deployment of the complexes. Ambushes usually are arranged in gorges, along railroads, or in river estuaries where enemy aircraft can make their way to a target at minimal altitude, i.e., remaining undetected for a long time.”

The role of mobile reserves grows by many times in modern warfare, when it is impossible for air defense systems to protect all important facilities, military expert Anton Lavrov believes. He stressed that it is possible to cite as an example the cruise missile strike against the Ash Shairat Airbase in April 2017. Based on intelligence that the base was unprotected, the Americans delivered a strike with impunity against Syrian Air Force aircraft in hangars...“At that time the Syrians did not have sufficient reserves to cover the base effectively with air defense weapons,” Lavrov noted.

If necessary, the new mobile air defense regiments can be redeployed in a few hours not only to any part of the country, but also beyond it. The Russian military received corresponding experience in the mid-2010s, when air defense groupings had been established in an ultrashort period of time in Crimea as well as in Syria. The redeployment of battalions of one of the S-300 modifications for the Syrian Army in the fall of last year can serve as an example of a swift, covert operation to redeploy the complexes. It became known only after photographs appeared on the Internet of fighting vehicles of the complex being unloaded from military transport aircraft...