

Russian Military Prepares For Growing War Danger

by Rachel Douglas

Jan. 29—Gen. Col. Valeri Gerasimov, chief of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff, bluntly characterized the strategic situation at an important military conference on Jan 26. “No one rules out the possibility of major wars,” said Gerasimov, “and there can be no question of being unprepared for them.” He went on, “Nonetheless, foci of instability on the perimeter of our borders present the greatest danger to our country at present.”

Russian wire services widely reported Gerasimov’s remarks, made at the annual year-in-review conference of the Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), an NGO that works closely with the Russian General Staff. Other than this news service, however, Western media and intelligence agencies are choosing to downplay, or ignore, the strategic reality that the British/NATO/Obama course of encirclement of Russia with antibalistic missile installations, and promotion of regime change by force, is backing the world’s second largest superpower into a corner, where it has no alternative but to prepare for thermonuclear confrontation.

Undeclared Wars

The high-level conference featured not only Gerasimov, but also Minister of Defense Gen. Sergei Shoygu, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Rogozin, and Army Gen. (ret.) Makhmut Gareyev, the senior strategist who is founder and head of the AMS. They all addressed, in blunt terms, preparations for the strategic

threat they perceive.

Gerasimov discussed which military functions could be outsourced, and which must unfailingly be performed by military personnel directly, a hot topic under current Russian budget-cutting pressures, and the aftermath of the ouster of accountant Anatoli Serdyukov as Defense Minister, in a huge corruption scandal late last year.

The Russian Chief of the General Staff also alluded to the proliferation of undeclared wars: “In the recent period, there is an observed tendency toward erasure of the boundaries between a state of peace and a state of war. Wars aren’t declared any more, and the ones that have started do not proceed according to familiar models. At the same time, the new types of conflict are comparable with war in their consequences.”

As an example of such non-traditional warfare, Gerasimov cited the “color revolutions,” aimed at countries in Eurasia and the Middle East. He said that they had demonstrated how “even a relatively prosperous nation may fall victim to foreign intervention and plunge into chaos.” He described “the broad use of non-military measures and the activation of the protest potential of a country’s population,” as well as “the use of covert military measures,” as part of this picture. He summarized, “The role of military science is to create a coherent theory of asymmetrical operations.” If strategists answer the question of “what modern warfare is,” he said, “then

we can determine the perspective for building our Armed Forces.” In this effort, he concluded, “We should not copy foreign experience and orient to the leading countries, but make our own, superseding efforts.”

Being Prepared To Respond

General Shoygu, too, struck a warning note, in his second major speech in two days (on Jan. 25 he keynoted the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Russian General Staff, instituted as a permanent body in 1763 at the close of the Seven Years War). Shoygu said, “Methods relying on force continue to play an important role in resolving economic and political conflicts among countries. In several areas, military dangers to the Russian Federation are intensifying. There are ‘hot spots’ near our borders, and our nation must be prepared to respond to any challenges and threats; for this we need armed forces with the best possible organizational structure, an effective command system, modern weapons, and professional personnel.”

General Gareyev, who at the age of 89, is one of Russia’s senior surviving World War II veterans, and was a leading strategist in the 1980s under the late Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, also spoke at the meeting of the AMS, which he founded in 1994. Gareyev addressed the challenge of training officers for the present period. “Only the high command, with its highly qualified specialists,” he said, “is in a position to ensure that higher educational institutions have the most sophisticated teaching and material resources, curricula, and academic literature.”

In statements made before the conference and reported by Itar-TASS and Interfax, Gareyev also highlighted the core strategic mission of the Armed Forces: “In particular, we shall discuss the priority development of our strategic nuclear forces and the space defense system, as the decisive factor in strategic deterrence of the main threats today. . . .”

Gareyev is famous as an innovator in combined-arms tactics and for his emphasis on “weapons based on new physical principles.” In 1990, he made waves with a book on the prospect of such “conventional” weapons rising to the same strategic level as nuclear weapons. Although the AMS is formally an NGO, the institution and Gareyev himself have had major input into all official revisions of Russian military doctrine in the post-Soviet period.

Defense Plans Upgraded

Today, Gerasimov and Shoygu met with President Vladimir Putin, to report to him on current strategic military exercises, and to present what they termed Russia’s new Defense Plan. Shoygu stated that the document, with input from 49 government agencies, takes into account all possible risks, and outlines military programs to be implemented, including upgraded weapons production.

Gerasimov then reviewed for Putin two main sets of military exercises. One is the large-scale Russian Navy maneuvers in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, for which landing craft and cruisers from the Black Sea Fleet have been assembling over the past month, including off the coast of Syria. Gerasimov said that the active stage of the naval maneuvers was taking place Jan. 29-30.

Less publicized, but of obvious importance in a tense situation vis-à-vis the United States, were strategic aviation flights completed in the recent period: testing of the capabilities of Russia’s long-range bombers. Gerasimov reported that these had been completed over the Black Sea, Baltic Sea, Norwegian Sea, and the northeast areas of the Atlantic Ocean, which is in the direction of North America.

No Compromise

While these military discussions were taking place, Russia’s political leadership was attempting to deal with the two most aggressive challenges to Russia’s commitment to the principle of national sovereignty being posed by the U.S. and NATO: ballistic missile defense, and the foreign-backed Syrian uprising against President Bashar Assad.

Contrary to the expectations of the naive, the newly re-elected Obama Administration is not budging an inch on its planned unilateral BMD strategy to encircle Russia (and China), in such a way as to cripple their strategic defense capabilities. In an interview with CNN’s Fareed Zakaria Jan. 27, in Davos, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev confirmed that there has been no “flexibility” on the part of the Obama Administration on missile defense. Russia has consistently demanded guarantees in writing that the BMD is not directed against it—a demand the West has refused to grant.

On the Syrian crisis, Russia also still stands firm, despite waves of contrary propaganda from NATO governments, and Western media. Russian policy is that the UN Charter must be observed, with respect to national sovereignty.