
All Zapad exercises which took place after the collapse of the former Soviet Union (in 1999, 2009, 2013 and 2017) attracted the attention of neighboring countries and led to different estimates and conclusions. Every exercise had something particular happening which could not be explained or understood in the West. Step by step, while analyzing Zapad exercises and changes in Russia and its armed forces, sufficient information was gathered allowing for the partial explanation of the behavior of Russian forces during different exercises, and the reasons why they acted in such a manner.

Contrary to NATO and a majority of Western countries, the Russian military plans and executes military activities differently. This could be explained by the czarist and Soviet military giving preference to Prussian General Staff (GS) traditions and philosophy. The General Staff, which advocated its own methods, allowed the national leadership to manage and use military instruments more effectively. The recent Russian military tends to keep those traditions alive, while believing that modern technological progress could reduce (if not eliminate) the weaknesses of the Prussian GS philosophy and increase its stronger aspects. The Russian military believes that detailed operation planning in advance, with synchronization of actions in its core and the ability of forces to implement plans and the leadership to control and command an entire operation can turn the military into an effective fighting and foreign policy tool.

Zapad exercises have shown that they are used to test the concept and planning of a potential Russian war with a strong opponent in the West (Zapad operation). The concept and plan are both backed up with adequate assumptions. An entire operation (war) is planned to be waged in three stages. The essence of the war (and plan) is a synchronization of military actions in time and space. Since 1999, all of this has been tested, in the earlier years in separate stages, and during Zapad 2017 tests were carried out in a more complex way and covered all three stages.

It is worth to note that at least two times (in 2009 and 2017), Russia used Zapad exercises not only to test its plans and troops, but as a deception and strategic communication message as well. It appears that in both cases, some success was achieved.

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Introduction

The Russian military tends to believe that the success of any military operation depends not only on the preparation of soldiers and units, but on how well an operation is prepared and planned as well. This is best illustrated by a historical case, where before launching an assault on the Izmail fortress, the famous Russian general A. Suvorov, so as to support his belief that “difficult training makes for an easy battle”, gave orders to build a mock fortress and to train as close to reality as possible.

Since then, the Russian military adopted numerous Prussian military traditions. The Russian czarist, Soviet and recent Russian Federation General Staff continues to devote great attention to implementing the principles of the Prussian General Staff, which emphasized military operations planning as essential. Whilst undergoing training in czarist, Soviet or more recently, the Russian General Staff Academy, Russian officers were taught that the success of any operation depends on how well all its steps are planned and synchronized in time and space, and how well troops are trained to perform all the actions foreseen for them in the plans. If we are to believe the recently-published memoirs of former Soviet generals, the Soviet Union’s plans to fight NATO were quite detailed and synchronized in time and space. The forces were only expected to implement those plans. General Staff officers were considered the elites of the command and control system with the right to not only advice commanders but also, if necessary, to guarantee the success of plans, to issue orders on behalf of commanders.

Traditions and experience remained important. This meant that the first Russian Federation defense plan of 2013–2015 signed by Russian President Putin in January 2013, and its update (2016–2020), signed in November 2015, were quite detailed, describing all the specific actions (not only military related) to be carried out by all the state agencies. In essence, they are more similar to what is known in NATO as a standing Defense Plan (SDP), only broader in their scope. According to different sources, the Plan for 2016–2020 contains a number of situational annexes and foresees involvement of more than fifty different institutions, ministries and companies. And one of those likely annexes is the one devoted to a war against a technologically-advanced opponent in the West.

1 The Soviet General Staff: A command structure for military planning and operations, CIA, May, 1982, unclassified on May 4, 2010 (CIA-RDP83T00233R000100170002-4)
2 TV news "Vesti"; 2013 01 29
Results arriving from an analysis of Zapad exercises from 1999 (especially (Zapad-09 and Zapad-13) allows one to assume that these exercises were used to test Russia’s ability to fight in a war with a similar or stronger opponent. In the study, the scenario for a potential war with the West is called a “Zapad operation”. A majority of Cold War waging principles remained, but modifications had been made by taking into account the new realities. First – Russia no longer possesses the Soviet Union’s military power. Second, the geopolitical situation is different – the West would not be fighting communists in an ideological confrontation, but a capitalistic national state in an ordinary war.

The General Staff Main Operational Directorate (Главное оперативное управление ГШ ВС РФ) was the main body compiling the “Zapad operation” concept and plan. The other directorates of the General Staff were involved in the creation of capabilities necessary to implement it. The creation of “Zapad operation” concept and plan is related to Army General J. Balujevskij name as well. While heading the Main Operational Directorate, he supervised the development of a theoretical plan for the “Zapad operation”. Later, when he became the first deputy of the Chief of General Staff (2001–2004), and the chief of General Staff (2004–2008), the plan already existed, but the capabilities to implement it were not yet present. The General Staff under his leadership became responsible for the creation of those capabilities/forces. Plans were made to introduce these reforms for the creation of such forces, with over a decade given as the time period for their implementation. The first stage of the reforms that finished in 2015 created the bulk of the forces and this allowed the first Russian state defense plan to be signed.

While working on the study, it was mainly official Russian MOD and other agencies’ information messages, unclassified Russian normative documents, teaching material and other analytical material such as conferences, interviews, briefings or video (mostly Russian) that were used. Some open and declassified Western analytical documents were also reviewed. All this allowed creating a “Zapad operation” description, and to later follow how it was tested during different Zapad exercises.

There is almost no doubt that in the event of a military conflict with the West, Russian allies would be involved, but only Russian actions were analyzed in the study. This was done deliberately. The Russian “Zapad operation” is a

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war where the worst-case scenario, the massive nuclear war, is foreseen, but Russia does not plan/seek to escalate the confrontation to this level. So even though a Russian-Belorussian military group participates in Zapad exercises with specific tasks assigned to it, the main expectations are placed on purely Russian capabilities, or more precisely, just some of them. Even though active military action during Zapad exercises took place in other Russian JSCs as well, I lacked sufficient evidences to prove that those forces were part of a “Zapad operation”. Forces from other JSCs should be taken only as a second echelon (supporting or reserve force), because, as it has been mentioned, widening of the conflict would endanger achieving success.

1. A Zapad Operation. Planning and Execution

Based on the available information, scenario analyses and actions performed during different Zapad exercises, one could state that a “Zapad operation” consists of three stages. The first stage is a sudden attack and a capture of bridgeheads, later entrenching and defending them. This might last from one to a few weeks. The second stage is safeguarding and extending achievements and trying to stabilize/terminate the conflict. This stage could last from one to three months. And the third stage is a massive (total) state defense all state assets involved and even moving onto a nuclear war if the defense fails. The entire length of a Zapad operation might be up to a year, the first two stages lasting from four to six months.

After the first and second stages, time breaks are planned. During those periods, the intensity of actions is to be reduced. Those time breaks are aimed to achieve two tasks. At first, they are used to collect/reinforce forces to run a following stage. At second, they are used to persuade the opponent to move to a conflict solution by non-military means. The Russian military made the assumption that Western national political elites would consider the conflict as different compared to the Cold War times when the USSR was planning to destroy the entire Western social system. This conflict would be taken as a conflict with another capitalistic state fighting for its national interests. Given such a situation, it would be in the West’s interest not to escalate the situation to mass destruction and to negotiate. Western behavior after the Georgian war and Crimea partially convinced Russians that they are right in this assumption. It is also very important to end each stage in an increasing trend. This might become a form of psychological pressure demonstrating to the opponent that neglecting the opportunity to negotiate would lead to outcomes that would be in Russia’s favor.
After an analysis of different Zapad scenarios and activities performed by troops, I can state that the principles of detailed planning are kept and the exercises are designed to test the leadership’s (HQs) ability to command and control the situation according to the plan and the abilities of troops/units to act accordingly or to react to and receive commands/inputs.

The checking of any detailed plan has its certain features. The most important thing is to check the synchronization of actions which depend on time and space parameters. The plan can be checked efficiently only when those parameters are minimally distorted, or put simply, are close to real time (period) and real space (distances). If they are compressed (distorted) into a short time and space exercise framework, it would not be possible to test synchronization. Only the ability of participants to perform the prescribed activities would be tested in this case.

So, testing a detailed plan during short time exercises is difficult (if at all possible). Also, this implies a huge number of participants, because all the troops involved/planned for all stages have to participate. Without any doubt, this would arouse the suspicion of neighboring countries. And again, only the ability of troops to perform a certain action would be tested. Short time exercises do not allow testing a more important thing – the ability of different units and HQs to act in a synchronized manner and present a timely reaction to the inputs received, and the political-military leadership to control and command the entire operation. This is possible only having the exercise run for almost as long as the operation itself.

Not a single Western country can allow itself such a “pleasure”. At first, after the Cold War, NATO and a majority of countries gave up updating their SDPs and relied more on so-called Contingency Operation Plans (COP). These are quite abstract and general. In case of danger, a COP is updated and transformed into a SDP. So, in the West, in order to have long-term exercises, an HQ must be established/appointed which can transform a COP into a SDP, then establish an adequate C2 and finally, summon the required troops to exercises. A majority of these elements are absent in peace time and have to be augmented, mobilized or established.

The situation is different in Russia. In 2014, the National Defense Management Center (NDMC) was established as a structural part of the General Staff. The General Staff/NDMC is responsible for implementation of the State Defense Plan. The NDMC, as a standing part of the GS, is able to perform as a training HQ and to test “Zapad operation”. C2 and its extension to C3 is being created right now under the recent military reforms. To conclude,
the structure and C3 framework already exist and there is no need to have anything additional created or mobilized to run a long-term exercise. There is another problem – the official announcement of a long-term exercise could reveal a real plan and draw attention. To avoid that long-term effect, the Russians apply their experience in secrecy and deception.

In order to run this kind of exercise and at the same time avoid drawing attention and reveal the plan, deception and secrecy (the famous maskirovka) are used. The clue here is to hide a long-term exercise within other military activities. In the case of Zapad, under the cover of officially-announced preparation for Zapad exercise (usually four to six months before the official dates), different “Zapad operation” stages/elements are tested. Because of other military activities conducted simultaneously, the exercise is masked as planned training or hidden among the other military activities being performed. This approach allows for “undercover” testing of “Zapad operation” activities lasting almost as long as planned or being initiated at a pre-planned time. It allows testing the most important thing – the ability of units to act in a synchronized manner (in time and space) and HQs to control this synchronization.

As mentioned, one of the most important preconditions allowing this to happen is an availability of overall C3 covering all command levels and territories. In Russia, the C3 is based on stationary (стационарные пункты управления) and mobile/field (полевые пункты управления) communication posts and facilitates the exchange of information and to send/receive commands/inputs from a tactical to a strategic level over distances of thousands of kilometers. Again, the General Staff (Main Communication Directorate) is responsible for the establishment of such C3, and military signal and command units are responsible for running this network.

Moreover, the method of spreading exercises over time allows using official exercises for demonstrative-propagandist purposes directed at internal and foreign audiences as well. Based on the highlights shown during different official Zapads, one could draw the conclusion that during the officially announced Zapad (usually lasting up to a week), only a certain stage or element of a “Zapad operation” is shown. Russia could choose the stage which favors Russian interests, considering the particular security situation at the time. This is how an official exercise is transformed into something similar to a Western Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD) event.

Also, as a result of the military reform, Russia switched from territorial to extra-territorial usage of troops. Today, all Russian forces must be able to

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7 In the JSC level those are represented by Signal (territorial) brigades or other signal units.
fight in unknown locations when they are needed. This means different “Zapad operation” elements can be tested in locations outside the western parts of Russia, therefore some Zapad training could be done (and is done) in other Russian regions (central, eastern, etc.) as well.

2. Analysis of Zapad Exercises

Let’s return to the previous Zapad exercises. After the Zapad-81 exercise and break-up of the Soviet Union, Zapad exercises were no longer conducted. It appeared to everybody at that time that Russia was willing to cooperate rather than to confront NATO. The first indications of a change appeared in 1999 when Russia began to behave strangely while initiating activities leading to a confrontation. The checking of a potential NATO response to those activities was performed as well. The 11th of June 1999 was the official end of the Kosovo war. Russia, with NATO, had to start a joint peace-keeping operation the next day (12th of June). Instead of this, a famous Russian paratrooper’s jump into the Pristina airport happened. A battalion of paratroopers suddenly commenced a march of a few hundred kilometers, entered the airport and started preparing for defense and receiving reinforcements. Then NATO troops arrived, they were not allowed to enter the airfield and, based on videos from that time, nobody even tried to explain to them what was happening. The same video showed ordinary Russian paratroopers having no idea of what was happening. They simply kept carrying out orders. So, what was happening? After many years, the commanding officer of those paratroopers, Russian “SPECNAZ” major, Yunus-bek Bamatgireyevich Yevkurov confessed that after the arrival, paratroopers found the airport already being controlled by Russian “SPECNAZ” soldiers. According to their claims, “SPECNAZ” had been sitting clandestinely in the airport already since May. Yevkurov had an order to defend the airport without any idea why and for how long. Paratroopers were only performing orders and implementing the plan. Seemingly, this was one of the first attempts of the Russian General Staff to check NATO’s reaction to provocative Russian actions. NATO gave up, started a dialog and Russian soldiers remained in Pristina. Then the General Staff carried out their next check – Zapad-99.

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10 “Россия планирует брать Запад на испуг”, Kommersant, 10-07-99.
2.1. Zapad-99

Zapad-99 took place when Russian armed forces were in very poor shape and had almost no full flesh units in the fields. All three stages of a “Zapad operation” (including the nuclear one) were planned by General Staff\(^1\) and were played out mostly theoretically in HQs. The exercise (plan) included new military structures (Joint Strategic Commands)\(^2\) which did not exist at that time and were created only during the reform of 2008. Only a small amount of indicating troops (up to a company) representing military districts and fleets were in the field, but the total number of participants reached fifty thousand\(^3\). If we compare Zapad-99 with today’s situation, there was one essential difference at that time. The potential attack targets, the Baltic States, were not NATO members. Back then, the Russian military had the idea to check (and to scare) NATO with a potential occupation of the Baltic States. An assumption was made that NATO would not risk starting a war (including nuclear) and wide-scale massive defense would not be needed. It would be enough only to capture the Baltics suddenly and threaten NATO with one or two nuclear strikes to force it to go to the negotiation table.

After Zapad-99, strategic exercises were postponed for quite a long time. Right after Zapad-99 it was announced that the next exercise would be in two years. According to Russian General Staff statements today, strategic level exercises are to be held in every military district every fourth year, so the next Zapad had to be held in 2001 or 2003. Neither one happened. And in 2007, it was the same. There was a simple explanation for such a pause, Russia had a plan which was checked, but forces were absent. The country was preparing for a wide-scale military reform to create such forces, so all the time and effort until the official declaration of the reform (October 15\(^{th}\) 2008) was devoted for preparation and experimentation\(^4\). Besides, in 2003 it was almost certain that the Baltic States would be invited to join NATO but Russia still had no forces to run a Zapad type of operation. Those forces did not exist in 2007 either and even more at the end of 2008, as soon as the reform started, the situation became critical. According to military estimates, Russia faced a situation where it had almost no forces for state defense. Time was needed for their creation. To solve that problem, the Zapad 2009 exercise was used as well.

2.2. Zapad-09

Zapad-09 was the first exercise conducted after Russia started its military reform. As it was mentioned, old units were disbanded or reformed, soldiers were retired and the creation of new units commenced. At one point in the spring of 2009, Russia had only five new-type brigades available\textsuperscript{15}, and the rest were under reformation or creation. Forces were so limited and weak that they would not have been able to withstand even the weakest offense on Russia. An approved State Defense Plan was absent also. The Russian political military leadership thought this weakness of their conventional forces could become a “window of opportunity” for the West (NATO) to attack Russia. Given this, alongside testing their new forces, it was also very important to gain time. Deterring the West from any temptation to consider military actions against a weak Russia was a way of winning some time. Even though the newly-formed forces were already sufficient for assembling the numbers announced for Zapad-09\textsuperscript{16}, the main accent in the official Zapad-09 exercise was simulation of a tactical nuclear weapons application. Officially, Zapad-09 emphasized the second stage of a “Zapad operation” – termination of a conflict with nuclear assets. I failed to find anything credible in open Russian sources stating Warsaw being a nuclear strike target. Only strategic communication specialists could explain how a simple simulation of a tactical nuclear strike in general became a famous nuclear attack on Warsaw in particular, but the strategic communication effect was achieved. The West concentrated on this message, debates and consultations started and Russia won the time it needed to strengthen its conventional forces.

Nevertheless, the “Zapad operation” in 2009 was tested according to all the above-mentioned principles: extension in time and geography. The test started much earlier, in July, then an exercise under the code name “Autumn-09” (“Осень-2009”) began. Besides the official Zapad-09 exercise, it included exercises like “Ladoga-09” and “Caucasus-09” as well. At that time the Russian political–military leadership was not afraid to speak openly. The commander of Russian land forces General-Lieutenant S. Skokov even gave an extensive interview about “AUTUMN-09”\textsuperscript{17}. It is worth pointing out that later,

\textsuperscript{15} Г. Миранович, А. Худолеев, А. Земляниченко, “Бригады набирают силу”, Красная Звезда, 17 02 2010.
\textsuperscript{16} Officially, around 12,500 troops, 700 tanks, IFVs, APCs and 250 artillery systems, 100 airframes. In the field, about the same...
in 2013 and 2017, nobody even mentioned anything similar to the AUTUMN exercises.

The first stage of the “Zapad operation”, a sudden assault and capture of territories, was tested episodically, in an open and hidden manner, mostly on the training grounds of Zapad-09. The imitation forces were represented by units up to a battalion in size. The third stage of the Zapad operation – massive defense – was not tested due to the absence of a new massive defense concept and its elements (a new mobilization system, for example). Among other problems not allowing expansion of the exercise was the absence of an actually working C3. The situation with C2 and C3 in the reformed armed forces was very bad. The president of Russia at that time, D. Medvedev, while talking to journalists confessed that up to 85 percent of the equipment in units was obsolete and not usable.  

2.3. Zapad-13

The official Zapad-13 took place when the Russian armed forces were almost reformed, with a bulk of the new units already formed and army general S. Shoigu, famous for his organizational skills, appointed as defense minister. The appearance of the reformed forces allowed Russia to have its first State Defense Plan for 2013–2015 signed in the history of the “New Russia”. The plan assigned conventional forces their own tasks and places. Tested in October 2012, the Russian nuclear triad guaranteed strategic deterrence, so Zapad-13 was concentrating on testing the “Zapad operation” and lasted much longer than officially declared. The already available sizable conventional component allowed terminating military conflicts mostly with conventional troops, so the number of participants in these exercises was greater than announced.

Zapad-13 started in March (11th–15th) as a strategic training event for headquarters and military management structure (стратегическая командно-штабная тренировка с центральными органами военного управления и военными округами). During this stage, most probably under the officially-announced title of preparation for Zapad, the subsequent stages of the “Zapad

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19 The first Russian State Defense Plan for 2013–2015 was signed by Putin on the 24th of January 2013.
21 Officially, around 13,000 troops, 350 tanks, IFVs, APCs, 50 artillery systems, and 50 airframes. After the exercise, in open sources – around 25,000 troops, 550 tanks, IFVs, APC, 100 airframes and 10 ships participated.
operation” were discussed, and time lines and tasks for the involved troops were given\textsuperscript{22}.

As it has already been mentioned, most probably, during the official Zapad-13 in September, emphasis was put on the second stage of the operation – expansion of success and conflict termination by conventional means. A majority of these stage activities took place during the officially-declared Zapad dates in the declared training grounds, while some occurred outside the set time period (for example, exercises of the Northern fleets on September 21\textsuperscript{st}–25\textsuperscript{th} or the Baltic fleet exercise\textsuperscript{23}). Conventional forces were already able to fulfill a majority of the tasks assigned to them, so the necessity to emphasize (and demonstrate) the nuclear component (especially tactical) during Zapad-13 was minimal. Only the strategic deterrence element was exercised.

The first “Zapad operation” stage – a sudden attack and capture – was performed by Rapid Reaction Forces which were created on the basis of former air-borne troops. Part of the activities was demonstrated openly during the official Zapad-13, some were hidden under Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) exercise “Cooperation 2013” (“Взаимодействие-2013”)\textsuperscript{24}. Some first-stage elements were tested months before the official Zapad-13. However, in a majority of cases it was not done to full scale or capacity\textsuperscript{25}. One of the major problems not allowing an increase in the scale of the exercise remained. There was still an absence of an adequate C2 system. It was still being created\textsuperscript{26} and only some forces (like the Rapid Reaction Forces) already used automated battle date systems (ABDS) or elements of those systems allowing them to have C2 and C3 established between units and different HQs.\textsuperscript{27}

The third stage – massive defense involving all state assets – was tested by involving other state institutions (Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Emergencies, etc.) and trying to run a mobilization of reserve units (most probably, unsuccessfully\textsuperscript{28}).

\textsuperscript{22} РИА Новости http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20130311/926661611.html#ixzz2aVgigbul.
\textsuperscript{23} Around 2,500 troops, 30 ships, 50 IFVs APCs and 20 airframes participated.
\textsuperscript{24} The exercise “Взаимодействие-2013” was run in September 2013.
\textsuperscript{25} For example, the joint Russian-Belorussian exercise on 22\textsuperscript{nd}–24\textsuperscript{th} April 2013, at the “Brestkij” training ground, involved units up to a battalion in size.
\textsuperscript{27} An example could be the Rapid Reaction Forces ABMS Andromeda D used in air-borne troops.
\textsuperscript{28} After the exercise Zapad-13 General Colonel V. Smirnov, the head of the mobilization unit in the MOD, was fired.
2.4. Zapad-17

Zapad-17 took place when the reform was almost complete, the State Defense Plan for 2016–2020 was renewed\(^29\), an actually-functioning contract soldier system was established, ongoing re-armament was underway, etc. All this strengthened the entire strategic deterrence and allowed General Staff to test first and second “Zapad operation stages” on a much wider scale. It is worth mentioning that some tactical elements of the “Zapad operation” were tested in other strategic exercises which took place before Zapad-17. For example, during the strategic exercise Vostok-14 the strategic movement of troops was tested\(^30\). A new form of electronic warfare – an electronic strike and blockade of territory by EW means (радиоэлектронный удар и информационное блокирование местности)\(^31\), a massive air strike\(^32,33\), troops informational warfare\(^34\), organization of territorial defense\(^35\), coordination with other forces\(^36\) – all these elements were tested during Centr-15 and Caucasus-16 exercises.

The appearance of a modern and new C2 system in the troops was an especially important improvement which allowed raising “Zapad operations” testing to a higher level of quality. The improvement included not only developments in ABDS like “Andromeda-D” but also similar ABDSs and new communication equipment (for example, Antey\(^37\)) appearing in the troops. As a result, troops were able to establish and maintain reliable and safe communication among HQs a distance thousands of kilometers from one another\(^38\). It is worth mentioning also that delivery of those ABDSs and new communication

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\(^29\) An updated Russian Defense Plan for 2016–2020 was signed in November 2015.
\(^30\) “Военных с Запада России перебросили авиацией на Дальний Восток для участия в стратегическом командно-штабном учении”, Интерфакс-АВН, Москва 19-09-2014.
\(^31\) “Новые формы и способы ведения радиоэлектронной борьбы (РЭБ), будут применены в ходе учения «Центр-2015»”, Минобороны Россия, Москва, РИА Новости, 15-09-2015.
\(^32\) А. Пинчук, „Массированным ударом „, «Красная звезда». 01-10-2015.
\(^33\) “ВС на учениях «Кавказ-2016» отработали авиаудар и борьбу с ракетами”, Москва, РИА Новости, 14 09 2016.
\(^34\) На учениях «Кавказ-2016» впервые отработали информационное противоборство», Москва, РИА Новости, 14 09 2016.
\(^36\) “На учениях «Кавказ-2016» отработали взаимодействие российских силовиков”, Полигон Опук (Крым), РИА Новости, 9 09 2016.
equipment to forces increased since 2016\textsuperscript{39, 40} with main delivery going to signal and other units of the JSC “West” in 2017\textsuperscript{41, 42}.

All this was enough to have new ABDS and communication systems in both stationary and mobile command posts. The last ones were created for each “Zapad operation” stage testing under the cover of officially-announced signal troops field camps\textsuperscript{43-46}. At the end, every unit participating in the exercise was “plugged in” and became controlled and commanded all the time. During the exercise, the 1\textsuperscript{st} tank Operational Command (OC) even had a new, experimental command post established\textsuperscript{47}.

But most importantly, the General Staff, through the National Defense Management Center, concentrated the entire C2 in its hands. At the same time, the NDMC already had huge computing capabilities allowing it to analyze, design and modify all the different battlefield situations simultaneously\textsuperscript{48}.

Again, Zapad-17 was extended in time. It started in January as JSC “West” leadership operative-mobilization training (gathering) (оперативно-мобилизационные сборы). The event involved around two hundred commanders and staff officers.\textsuperscript{49} According to open sources, new tactical elements (like tactical air lift)\textsuperscript{50} were demonstrated, participants received time-lines for operation stages testing and were ordered to run more than two thousand different tactical training and exercises under the cover of preparation for the

\textsuperscript{39}“Концерн «Созвездие» поставил Минобороны первые комплексы «Антей»”, Интерфакс-Ави, 15 05 2017.
\textsuperscript{40}“Войска связи ЗВО в 2016 году получат 2,5 тысячи единиц новой техники”, Москва, РИА Новости, 02 01 2016, http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160102/1353298275.html#ixzz3wFolDOI.
\textsuperscript{42}И. Мугинов, “Войска связи ЗВО в 2016 году получат 2,5 тысячи единиц новой техники”, РИА Новости, 02 01 2016, http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20160102/1353298275.html#ixzz3wFolDOI.
\textsuperscript{43}М. Севастьянов, “Учения ВДВ на северо-западном направлении: длинные руки русского десанта”, РИА Новости, 07 07 2017.
\textsuperscript{44}“Западный военном окружке проходят учения с соединениями связи”, Пресс-служба Западного военного округа 31 07 2017, http://structure.mil.ru/structure/okruga/west/news/more.htm?id=12135740@egNews.
\textsuperscript{46}На учениях “Запад-2017” связисты ВДВ обеспечивают пункты управления связью на расстоянии до 2 тыс. Км, 16 09 2017 www.mil.ru.
\textsuperscript{47}Н. Сурков, А. Рамм, Е. Дмитриев, “Арматами” будет управлять “штаб звездных войн”, Известия, 20 09 2017.
\textsuperscript{49}С. Пятаков, “Комсостав ЗВО начал подготовку к учениям «Запад-2017»”, Москва, РИА Новости, 10 01 2017.
\textsuperscript{50}“В ЗВО прошла тренировка по авиапереброске войск на большие расстояния”, пресс-служба ЗВО, Москва, РИА Новости, 12 01 2017.
official Zapad-17\textsuperscript{51}. After a few days, a very similar event took place at the strategic level. Here, commanders of all the JSCs, and chiefs of bodies were involved in an overall C3 (a head of NDMC, for example), commanders and chiefs of staffs of OCs also participated. Most probably they also received the same information regarding the exercise, were introduced to new JSC work elements, lessons learned in Syria, some strategic level activities to be tested during the exercise (like the activation and functioning of federal region civil defense HQ in a time of war), etc.

Before the official Zapad-17 took place, forces exercised the first and second “Zapad operation” stages under the cover of planned exercises or activities devoted to prepare for it. A majority of the events happened over the 3rd–7th of July and 4th–19th of August. The official Zapad-17 held on September 14th–20th emphasized the third (massive, state-wide defense) stage and was partially oriented to demonstrate to the West the Russian desire to fight to the end in the event of military conflict.

Zapad-17 was essentially the same as previous exercises but was conducted to a much higher qualitative level. The new security situation required the exercise to be used for strategic messaging again, therefore, as soon as the first two aggressive stages had been exercised; it was in the interests of MOD to demonstrate a defensive stage. Emphasizing transparency and openness as their main motives, the MOD invited journalists and observers from other countries to observe part of the official Zapad.

2.4.1 Zapad-17. “Zapad operation” first stage

Let’s take a closer look at the Zapad-17 events and try to understand what happened there. A number of indicators (facts) show that a great portion of declared-as-planned activities which happened in the beginning of July (3rd–7th) and almost for the entirety of August (4th–19th) could be taken as “Zapad operation” first and second stage testing. Those activities included not only ordinary units training in the field but also so-called special training (специальная подготовка), command post exercises (командно-штабные тренировки) and field camps (полевые сборы). During both periods, mobile command posts were activated and communication channels were established. Most probably for the first stage, overall C2 (and even C3) was based on the

Andromeda–D system. The second stage used Andromeda-D and next to it, signals units from JSC “West” (three signal brigades and some smaller signal units) established a C3 based on stationary and mobile command posts. Topic and time lines of many activities were obviously coordinated and matched activities to be done in any adequate stage. A majority of participating units were full-flesh units (battalion combat groups) and acted in a joint manner (were supported by aviation, EW, naval, etc.).

The first “Zapad operation” stage training was done under the cover of three officially-announced strategic level command Post Exercises CPXs. Those were: Rapid Reaction Forces CPX, JSC “West” joint military group CPX and JSC “West” air space defense HQs CPX. All CPXs started at about the same time. This is how the course of events was run. Rapid Reaction Force CPX started on the 3rd–4th July. Units from the 98th air-borne division and the 31st air-borne brigade were alerted. They left permanent locations and started preparations to act: they activated mobile C2, initiated SOPs for troops and arms parachuting etc. JSC “West” air space defense units as participants of their own CPX were preparing to respond to opponent response (a massive air strike) by EW units training how to hide their own forces and air defense S400 systems preparing to engage targets. JSC “West” joint military group CPX trained forces how to avoid responding to strikes by maneuvering. July 5th was the day when an assault started. And it started according to the rules of a modern war by precise long range guided munition (PLRGM) strikes to critical opponents’ infrastructure first. This was done by two strategic bombers TU-95MS involved in a real combat mission in Syria and firing four air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM) X-101 to weapon arsenals located more than a thousand kilometers away. Alongside bombers, a strategic “Smolensk” submarine in the Barrens Sea fired a cruise missile targeting a “sophisticated na-

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54 “В Псковской области начинается активная фаза учений двух соединений ВДВ”, Москва, РИА Новости, 05 07 2017.
55 “В ЗВО началось КШУ по управлению авиацией и войсками противовоздушной обороны”, Минобороны России, 03 07 2017.
56 “Москва Крылатые ракеты и ударные беспилотники «противника» уничтожают авиация и расчеты ПВО в ходе учений на северо-западе РФ”, Интерфакс-АВН, 03 07 2017.
59 “Российские Ту-95МС нанесли ракетный удар по ИГ в Сирии”, Москва, ТАСС, 05 07 2017.
val target” located 400 kilometers away. In reality, this “sophisticated target” might have been ships in a port.

The same day, Baltic Fleet ships left for the sea. Vessels performed safe sea area establishment, air defense, ASW, mining and de-mining, and naval infantry transport training.

All places foreseen for capture were firstly hit by a massive air strike. The air strikes were imitated by JSC “West” aviation which exercised live air strikes in training grounds in the Kaliningrad, Pskov and Leningrad regions on the 5th of July. And right after it, Rapid Reaction Forces started an offense. They were represented by the 31st air-borne brigade and the 98th division which conducted an assault by parachuting troops, equipment and weapons in the “Staryje Strugi” and “Kislov” training grounds and capturing an airfield (Staryje Strugi). Also, they exercised infiltration of diversionary groups in the opponent’s rear and, as soon as bridgeheads were captured, entrenching took place.

The same happened in Kaliningrad. Baltic fleet aviation intensified activities in the Baltic Sea air space, provided low-altitude close air support (CAS) for the 336th naval infantry brigade which in turn conducted a naval infantry landing in Chmeliovka. Sudden assault continued and was expanded. In Pskov, forces holding bridgeheads began receiving reinforcements. On the 6th and 7th July, troops from the 76th air-borne division were brought to the captured places by planes and helicopter which landed on the captured Staryje

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60 “Атомная подлодка «Смоленск» в Баренцевом море поразила учебную цель крылатой ракетой «Гранит» на дальности 400 км - Минобороны РФ”, Москва, Интерфакс-АВН, 05 07 2017.
61 “На Балтике начались учения ВМС”, Аргументы Недели, 5 07 2017.
63 “На Балтийском флоте начинается активная фаза учения разнородных сил”, Пресс-служба Западного военного округа, 05 07 2017.
68 “Летчики Балтфлота провели полеты над морем и бомбометание по полигону в Калининградской области”, Москва, Интерфакс-АВН, 06 07 2017.
69 “Летчики Балтфлота провели полеты над морем и бомбометание по полигону в Калининградской области”, Москва, Интерфакс-АВН, 06 07 2017.
70 “Около 600 военнослужащих и порядка 20 кораблей были задействованы в учении Балтфлота по высадке десанта в Калининградской области”, Москва. Интерфакс-АВН, 07 07 2017.
Strugi airfield. Simultaneously, additional reconnaissance and diversionary groups were parachuted behind opponent lines and started massive diversions and ambushes. The remaining air-borne units exercised penetration and deep raids behind enemy lines in other training grounds in the Pskov region.

General Purpose Forces followed Rapid Reactions Forces and joined the offense. In the training grounds of Leningrad, Nizhniy-Novgorod and Moscow regions, reconnaissance troops from JSC “West” ground force units were running special exercises devoted to offense by small groups and city battle topics. Right after the recce exercises, the main ground forces moved in with moto-riflemen and tank units conducting exercises in the Moscow region. Topics remained the same – fighting in the cities, new types of fire support (tank carousel), marches, combat raids and river crossing, coordination actions with air frames and helicopters. More than 1,500 soldiers, 200 tanks, IFVs and APCs, Su-34 jets and Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters were involved. In Kaliningrad, the 11th Army Corp was also involved. The 79th separate motorized riflemen brigade was exercising offense, combat engineer recce and fighting in unknown territories with more than 1,500 soldiers and 200 pieces of weaponry involved.

Offending forces might have met resistance, so to help them, short-range missiles were used. Three missile brigades from JSC “West” armed with Iskander M and Tochka-U missiles started their own exercises. At the same time, the fourth missile brigade (448th) was conducting a live missile launch in the Kapustin Jar firing range next to Astrakhan. Simultaneously, to mislead and not allow opponent Air Force striking advancing troops, EW (Krasucha 2/4) and Air defense (S400) units exercised defense against a massive air strike.

Summing up all these activities, one feature does stand out – a sudden
attack was performed in every location. The offense was supported from the air, sea, and land; at long distances and close ranges; involving PGLRMs, EW and air defense. The number of participants and weaponry involved in the mentioned activities alone (see Table 1) rounded up to more than 14,000 soldiers, 1,000 pieces of different weaponry, 3,000 pieces of other military equipment, around 70 air frames and helicopters and 20 ships. All the activities were controlled and coordinated from the NDMC with the involvement of Andromeda-D\textsuperscript{78} and other systems. It is worth mentioning that a number of other military exercises and activities took place at the same time in other Russian territories as well. Theoretically, they might be assigned to the first stage as well, but more information and data is needed before a more reliable statement can be made.

Table 1. Zapad, 2017 July, likely 1st stage “Sudden Attack/Capture”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date 2017 JULY</th>
<th>JSC</th>
<th>Unit/Location</th>
<th>Size*</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JULY 3-5</td>
<td>JCS RRF</td>
<td>Air-borne troops 98th D, 76th D 31st B Transport avia, Pskov</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Offense, Alarmed, leaving garrisons to boarding sites, preparing for action, establishing C2</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 5</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td>Northern Fleet Submarine Forces Barents Sea</td>
<td>+100S 1 SM</td>
<td>Offense, Nuclear Submarine “Smolensk” launching SLCM “Granit” against sophisticated naval target (distance 400 km)</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 5</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td>Start aviation OC Strat bombers Syria</td>
<td>S 2 Ai</td>
<td>Offense, 2 Tu 95 MSM bombers launching 4 ALCM X-101 to targets in Syria</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 5</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>Three MsBs Moscow Leningrad/Kursk</td>
<td>+500 S 200 ME</td>
<td>Offense, Coordination of missile strike, electronic launches</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 5</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>X? ABC unit Leningrad</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Offense/defense, Aerosol Camouflage of Iskander missiles</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>AAD units, District wide</td>
<td>+5000 S +2000 ME</td>
<td>Offense, Area AAD, AtoA fighting training, S 400 training</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Units/Locations</th>
<th>Troops</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Nature of Operation</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>EW units from Moscow, Nizhniy Novgorod, Kaliningrad, Kursk</td>
<td>+150S 20 ME</td>
<td>Offense, EW units measures to protect troops, SIGINT</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>448th MsB Astrakhan</td>
<td>+500 S 100 ME</td>
<td>Offense, Launch of Tochka U missile in Kopustin Jar shooting range</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 5-7</td>
<td>JCS RRF</td>
<td>Air-borne troops 98thD, 76thD 31st B Transport aviation Pskov</td>
<td>+2500 S 500 ME 40 Air and H</td>
<td>Offense, Alarmed, air transport, air assault, capture of bridgeheads, reinforcements by air and land, diversions in the rear</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>Baltic Fleet, Baltic Sea/ Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+1000S 20 SS</td>
<td>Offense/Defense Mine sweeping, protection of ships on-route, sea mining, transport of NI, fire support from the sea to amphibious landing</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>Baltic Fleet, Aviation unit Kaliningrad</td>
<td>(? S 10 Ai and H)</td>
<td>Offense, Massive air strike, Assistance to amphibious assault</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>6th Air OC, Aviation units Leningrad</td>
<td>(? S 10? Ai and H)</td>
<td>Offense, Massive air strike, Assistance to amphibious assault</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>X? OC X? MR Nizhniy Novgorod</td>
<td>+1300S 250 ME 10? Ai and H</td>
<td>Offense, Regimentals TG in offense, river crossing, battle in the cities, new tactics “tank carousel”</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 6</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>X? OC RECCE units Nizhniy Novgorod, Moscow, Leningrad</td>
<td>+1000 S 200 ME</td>
<td>Offense, Training on fighting in the cities, capture of objects, diversions of foe HQs and C2 nets</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY 7</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Corp, X? Motorifle units Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+1500 S 200ME</td>
<td>Offense, Fighting in offense, marches, capture of objects</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** | 14 000S +3600ME +70Ai +20 SS 1SM | Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions |

2.4.2 Zapad-17. “Zapad operation” second stage

Exercising the second “Zapad operation” stage – safeguarding and extending achievements and stabilization/termination of the conflict – took place in August (probable dates 7\textsuperscript{th}–23\textsuperscript{rd}). During that period, a number of two-sided exercises or announced-as-planned military activities, at first glance unrelated to one another, took place in JSC “West”. Again, Rapid Reaction and General Purpose forces worked in a highly synchronized manner. JSC “West” signal units started a district level signal exercise on the 13\textsuperscript{th}–14\textsuperscript{th} August\textsuperscript{79}. Participants were the 1\textsuperscript{st} JSC command/control brigade, the 132\textsuperscript{nd} territorial signal brigade and the 9\textsuperscript{th} signal brigade from the 20\textsuperscript{th} operational command. Altogether, there were around 4,000 soldiers, 1,000 pieces of different equipment\textsuperscript{80}. They were joined by signal units from the Baltic Fleet\textsuperscript{81} 82 and the 38\textsuperscript{th} air-borne troops signal brigade\textsuperscript{83}. During the exercise, an actually-functioning C3 consisting of around fifty mobile command posts\textsuperscript{84} and involving units from a company to strategic HQ level was created. As a result, all different exercises participants became plugged in to one overall C3.

This stage, like the first one, was again started by Rapid Reaction Forces. On the 8\textsuperscript{th}–11\textsuperscript{th} of August air-borne troops and naval infantry launched two-sided exercises in the Pskov and Kaliningrad regions. In Pskov, it was called a demonstrative two-sided regimental exercise. The exercise topic was a regiment in offense. Here, one battalion tactical group (BTG) was parachuted with combat vehicles and captured an airfield, the second BTG was delivered to the captured airfield by helicopters and the third one made a combat march on land while crossing a river and joining another two battalions\textsuperscript{85}. All the offending forces had fire support from their own artillery and bombers and helicopters coming from the Army aviation. The exercise involved the 76\textsuperscript{th} and


\textsuperscript{80} “В Западном военном округе проходят учения с соединениями связи”, Пресс-служба Западного военного округа, 31 07 2017.


\textsuperscript{82} “Связисты Балтфлота испытают на учениях современные средства связи”, КАЛИНИНГРАД, РИА Новости, 15 08 2017.

\textsuperscript{83} “Связисты Балтфлота испытают на учениях современные средства связи”, Пресс-служба Западного военного округа, 15 08 2017.

\textsuperscript{84} “ВДВ России в ходе пятидневных учений в СЗФО отработают весь спектр задач войск на период военного времени”, Интерфакс-АВН, 07 08 2017.

\textsuperscript{85} “ВДВ России в ходе пятидневных учений в СЗФО отработают весь спектр задач войск на период военного времени”, Интерфакс-АВН, 07 08 2017.
106th air-borne divisions, the 31st and 45th air-borne brigades and the 38th air-borne signal brigade. The participants of all those events were more than 2,500 soldiers, around 600 pieces of weaponry and few dozen jets and helicopters. At the same time, (9th August) the 336th naval infantry brigade and the 7th moto-rifleman regiment started a two-sided exercise in the Chmeliovka training ground (Kaliningrad). Here, around 500 marines, supported from the air, tried to capture a bridgehead which was defended by motorized infantry. In total, more than 2,000 soldiers, around 100 pieces of weaponry, 20 ships and 12 air frames were involved. Alongside this, the Baltic Fleet and its aviation units conducted, announced as separate, exercises on fire and close air support (CAS). Combat engineers and EW units were involved in this venture also.

A fight for captured areas continued. Now land forces employed additional air and coastal defense. The same day (9th August), in the Kaliningrad region, the local coastal defense brigade performed live firing from “Bal” and “Bastion” systems and air defense S300 systems withstood a massive oppo-
nents' air strike. Simultaneously, there was another two-sided exercise between the already-mentioned 336th naval infantry brigade and the 79th motorized infantry brigade (11th Army Cops, Kaliningrad). Here, everything was done in opposite – naval infantry defended an area and infantry tried to recapture it. Around 700 soldiers and 40 combat vehicles were involved here. On the 11th of August, motorized riflemen from the 11th Corps units received support from EW unit belonging to the 79th motorized infantry brigade. Around 100 soldiers and 20 pieces of equipment had an exercise on blocking enemy communication and protecting their own forces against air strikes. Defense of captured territories and entrenchment exercises continued everywhere with aviation, artillery, EW means were intensively used. The geography of these exercises was widened. The 20th OC from JSC “West” started a two-sided exercise between two newly formed divisions (3rd and 114th). Officially it was announced as a certification exercise and units from both divisions performed offense, defense, regrouping, receiving supplies after a battle, but this was exactly what they would be doing if involved in the second stage of a “Zapad operation”. The same activities (offense, defense, regrouping, etc.) were

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seen in training fields located in the Moscow, Nizhniy-Novgorod and Smolensk regions, where the 1st tank OC had own exercises. Again, artillery, aviation and EW means were used intensively. In the Leningrad region, the 138th motorized infantry brigade belonging to the 6th OC from JSC “West” was also running similar training.

With the end of the stage approaching, pressure on the opponent had increased. JSC “Nuclear forces” joined the game by starting the so-called planned exercise. Eleven strategic missile regiments spread in the combat patrols exercising in Russia, withstanding opponents’ SOF attempts to destroy missiles and imitating missile launches. Naval and air components of JSC “Nuclear Forces” were also involved – the submarine “Severodvinsk” did live firing with “Caliber” cruise missiles and strategic bombers accompanied by jets flew a patrol mission in the Pacific.

When summarizing all the mentioned activities, one can see that everywhere a wide scale offense was carried out with the tasks to defend captured areas, to extend success and in the final stages, to get nuclear forces involved to force the opponent to reconsider fighting and move on to the negotiation table. All unit actions on land received widespread air support, LRPGMs were

121 “Ракетоносцы ВКС выполнили полеты над нейтральными водами в Тихом океане”, Москва, РИА Новости, 24 08 2017.
used and air space control and territorial air defense was implemented. More than 27,000 soldiers, around 4,200 combat and other equipment, 50 air frames and 20 ships might have been involved in all the activities mentioned above (see Table 2). And again, a number of other military exercises and activities, which might be assigned to the second stage, took place in different Russian locations, but to be confident about this, more information and data is needed.

Table 2. Zapad, 2017 August, likely the 2nd stage “Expend and Reinforcement of the Success”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>JSC</th>
<th>Unit/ Location</th>
<th>Size*</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>3 Signal Br Nizhniy Novgorod, S Petersburg Voronezh, Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+5000S 1000ME</td>
<td>Establish and maintaining overall C2</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug?</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Corp, 7th MR Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+500S 1000ME</td>
<td>Defense against amphibian landing (EW, Artillery support)</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 4</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>Transport Avia OC</td>
<td>+500S 1000ME</td>
<td>Offense to support RRF Air-borne troops EX</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 8-11</td>
<td>JSC RRF</td>
<td>76thD, 31stB, 45thB, 106thD Pskov</td>
<td>+2500S 1000ME</td>
<td>Offense regiment exercise air assault, capture of airfield, reinforcement by air, raids in opponent rear</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 8</td>
<td>JSC West,</td>
<td>11th Corp, 79th MB Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+700S 1000ME</td>
<td>Offense BTG training with artillery and CAS</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 9</td>
<td>JSC RRF</td>
<td>336th NIB Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+500S 1000ME</td>
<td>Offense Naval landing (battalion) Fire support from ships</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 10</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>BF, Naval Engineer R, Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+150S 1000ME</td>
<td>Offense Demining, mine clearing potential landing zones</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Units/Action Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 11</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Corp AAD units Kaliningrad</td>
<td>Offense/Defense Two-sided, S-300 - area defense from opponent aviation (simulated by BF aviation).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 13</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Corp X? MR units Kaliningrad</td>
<td>Offense. Tank crew camp, Live tank shooting, engaging different targets, reacting to new inputs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 14-18</td>
<td>JSC West, BF Aviation</td>
<td>Kaliningrad</td>
<td>Offense. Tactical aviation training; Air to air combat, CAS to land troops.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 15</td>
<td>JSC West, BF Signal units</td>
<td>Kaliningrad</td>
<td>Signal exercise, maintaining overall C2 (a part of JSC signal EX).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 15</td>
<td>JSC West, BF Baltic Sea</td>
<td>+ 1000S 20 SS</td>
<td>Command training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 15-?</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td>Eleven (11) St MsR Patrolling Four regions of Russia</td>
<td>Offense/Defense Strategic missile patrolling, imitation of ICBM (Topol) launch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 17</td>
<td>JSC West, 6th OC 138th MB Leningrad</td>
<td>+1000S 100ME</td>
<td>Offense/Defense. Two sided BTG EX, communication, artillery support, UAV, marches, live firing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 17</td>
<td>JSC West, EW unit 16th EW B Tambov</td>
<td>+500S 100ME</td>
<td>Offense/Defense. Jamming, protection of own forces from air,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 17</td>
<td>JSC West, Aviation Kursk R.</td>
<td>10Ai</td>
<td>Offensive/Defensive Air to Air, CAS</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 17</td>
<td>JSC West, 20th OC Artillery, RECCE units Different locations</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>As part of EX of 20th OC from Aug 14-18</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 18</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear, NF SSBN “Severodvinsk” Barents Sea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SLCM “Kaliber” shooting, Distance 600km.</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 19</td>
<td>JSC West, 1st tank OC Artillery units Nizhniy Novgorod</td>
<td>+1000S, 300ME</td>
<td>As part of 1st tank OC EX from Aug 15.</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 23</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear, Strat aviation</td>
<td>2-6 Ai</td>
<td>Strategic patrol, Japan, Yellow and South-China Seas accompanied by jets, A 50 and refueling</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 23-25</td>
<td>JSC West, 6th Air OC Kursk Astrakhan</td>
<td>+100 15Ai</td>
<td>Alarm, Relocation of aircrafts to reserve airfields</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+27000S +4200ME +55Ai 20SS</td>
<td>* All numbers come from OS or recalculated/best estimate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.3 Zapad-17. “Zapad operation” third stage

The third stage - a massive (total) state defense involving all state assets and moving to a nuclear war if deterrence fails - started on the 11th–12th of September. Again, like in the previous stages, a lot of activities were performed by Rapid Reaction and General Purpose units, Nuclear Forces and forces and assets belonging to other state institutions (Russian National Guard, Ministry of Emergencies, Border guards, etc.) were announced as planned and not connected to Zapad. But when a closer look is taken, they obviously fell under one type of activity and were coordinated and synchronized. They all fully matched the content of this stage – massive (total) defense in case of the failure to achieve tasks from previous “Zapad operation” stages. The officially-announced Zapad-17 days matched the stage, and during those days special demonstrative activities were organized for journalists and military observers from abroad. These demonstrations were oriented to emphasize and demonstrate the Russians’ desire to perform total defense with counterattack elements.

Like in previous stages, overall C3 was available again. All participating Rapid Reaction and General Purpose forces established a C3I (C3+Information) and activated mobile command posts. Command Posts kept working in real time mode and used ABMSs (Andromeda-D, Poliot-K, etc.). All this allowed HQs located 1,000 or even 2,000 kilometers away from each other to synchronize actions. As a result, again, an overall C3I including everyone from a soldier to the highest HQ was in action.

The start of the stage was a very unusual and interesting one. On the 12th of September a test launch of a ground-based “Jars” intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) was done. Unlike short-range ballistic missiles, strategic bombers or submarines which are dual (nuclear and conventional) weapons

carriers, ICBMs carry only nuclear charges. So, even though it was officially announced as a test launch, in essence, this launch was the start of the third stage – a massive, total and final defense, *when a country is ready to use nuclear weapons*. Whether this was by accident or not, but this particular launch was highly synchronized with another very strange event, which initiated a lot of subsequent activities. The activities would be considered very appropriate in the event of nuclear attacks. Numerous anonymous phone calls about bombs being planted in different places were made. Those calls in much smaller numbers continue even today at the time of the writing of this text. Russian officials hurried to deny the case being an exercise or related in any way to *Zapad*, or identified those calls as being done by provocateurs from abroad. Regardless of the cause, those calls allowed other Russian structures and institutions (Russian Guard, Ministry of Emergencies, FSB, etc.) to do what they would have done in the event of mass defense (nuclear war) – a mass evacuation. During the first wave of calls lasting from the 10th to the 12th of September and covering Russia from Kaliningrad to Omsk, a few dozen civil objects, ranging from administrative buildings to shopping centers, were evacuated with the number of people involved (evacuated) reaching 45,000.

The exact number of servicemen from the Russian Guard, Ministry of Emergencies and other institutions involved in evacuating, searching, guarding and other activities was not announced, but the count would certainly go into the thousands. Knowing that all those institutions are included in the C3I managed by NDMC and can be (and most probably were) commanded and controlled from it, the third stage became very realistic from the beginning.

Let's reconstruct the scenario for this stage, based on what the forces were doing. The General Purpose forces were preparing for defense. The defense which most probably would be unavoidable given that first two stages failed to force the opponent to negotiate and NATO, beginning wide-scale conventional operations, to push Russian forces out from the occupied territories. In the beginning, in every location defense was prevailing. It started

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almost at the same time across a front almost 600 km long, as the Defense Ministry stated. In Kaliningrad the 11th Corps forces started, again claimed-as-planned, an exercise devoted to conduct defense. They were seconded by aviation and air defense S300, S400 exercises and a naval special force unit exercise on how to conduct defense against underwater diversions. In the Leningrad region, at the Pechenga training ground around 1,500 motorized infantry soldiers supported by 300 IFVs and APCs kept entrenching and preparing for defense. At the Pumanki training ground next to Murmansk 600 naval infantry soldiers and around 300 different pieces of equipment and armament, supported by artillery and aviation, kept preparing to repel a naval landing. The 6th tank brigade from the 1st tank OC was boarding trains in the Moscow region to reinforce Russian-Belorussian troops in Belorussia, which were establishing defense in local training grounds. The Northern and Baltic fleets left ports, sailed to reserve operational areas and initiated
To engage advancing troops at long distances and before first contact with defenders, new tactical elements (like helicopter ambushes) were exercised and LRPGMs were applied. The last was done by missile brigades which struck opponent command and communication posts by “Iskander” and “Tochka-U” rockets. The same, just as a part of real combat operation, was done in the Mediterranean Sea where Russian submarines “Velikiy Novgorod” and “Kalino” launched “Caliber” attacks against real targets in Syria. Rapid Reaction Forces were involved in delay and restrain operations by performing combat raids behind the enemy or parachuting and executing diversions behind enemy lines, selecting targets for PRPGM strikes and doing everything to

restrain the advance of enemy troops. To recover and restore battle damage, logistic units exercised damaged vehicles evacuation from a battlefield; field repair and troop resupply activities.

With the enemy stopped and tied-up in defensive battles, preparation for a counter-strike began. As soon as the situation allowed, an offense started on all fronts extending from Leningrad to Kaliningrad and Belorussia. A lot of attention went towards providing this counter-offense with credible air support. The second part of the official Zapad-17 exercise witnessed active counter-offensive activities. In Russia, at the same time, a second wave of bombing calls happened. The calls remained declared as having nothing in common with the exercise, but as a result of this, the Russian Guard and other forces continued searching and safeguarding objects located mostly in Russian western and southern regions and performing real evacuation of people who happened to be in those objects. The numbers became impressive, more than 200,000 people were evacuated and more than 700 objects searched. This suggests the assumption that Russia was simulating a situation then the West, while repelling successful Russian counter attacks, responded by multiple strikes deep into Russian territory.

Russia responded with limited nuclear strikes. These were imitated by launching a “Iskander” missile, which can carry a nuclear charge, to maximum distance in the Kapustin Jar\textsuperscript{172} firing range; launching a mobile ICBM “Jars” in Plesetsk\textsuperscript{173} and strategic bombers Tu22M3 which flew an announced-as-planned event again, next to the Baltic States and Norway\textsuperscript{174}. After a few days, the MOD announced the beginning of massive, planned checks of combat readiness in all JSCs. Now not dozens but hundreds of units left their permanent locations, moving to training grounds and engaging in different activities. Bombing calls kept coming. The National Guard and other forces, with NDMC supervising everything, continued to work. In total, since the first calls were made until the middle of October, more than 2,460 objects were search in 170 Russian cities\textsuperscript{175} and 1 percent of the entire population or 1.4 million people evacuated\textsuperscript{176}. This was exactly the situation which would occur if nukes were used.

On the 26\textsuperscript{th} of October, the worst-case scenario of the third stage – a mass exchange of nuclear strikes – was played out in the NDMC. According to Russian legislature, only the President can authorize usage of nuclear weapons. On the 26\textsuperscript{th} of October a Russian National Security Board meeting took place\textsuperscript{177}. It is quite probable that right after it, the entire Board moved to the NDMC premises and, now as its Supreme Commander (Nuclear) Cell, exercised a decision to use nukes. The same night, the Russian nuclear triad imitated a massive nuclear strike by simultaneously launching an ICMB in Plesetsk, ICBMs from three submarines in the Barents and Okhotsk seas and cruise missiles from strategic bombers. It was declared that all missiles hit targets located thousands of kilometers away\textsuperscript{178} \textsuperscript{179}. Also, it was announced that Putin,

\textsuperscript{172} “Комплекс «Искандер-М» на учениях запустил ракету на максимальную дальность”, Москва, РИА Новости 18 09 2017.
\textsuperscript{175} “В России эвакуировали уже более миллиона человек в связи с «минированиями», Москва, РИА Новости, 10 10 2017.
\textsuperscript{176} А. Карапетян, “В РФ почти 1,4 миллиона человек эвакуировали с начала волны «минированияй»”, Москва, РИА Новости 26 10 201.
\textsuperscript{177} RTR news "Vesti, 19:00", 26 10 2017.
\textsuperscript{178} “Минобороны провело тренировку по управлению Стратегическими ядерными силами”, Москва, РИА Новости, 26 10 2017.
\textsuperscript{179} “В рамках учений РВСН с Плесецка запущена МБР «Тополь» - Минобороны РФ”, Москва, Интерфакс-АВН, 26 10 2017.
as the supreme commander, personally authorized the launches\textsuperscript{180}. This was the end of the “Zapad operation” test and Zapad exercise. The next day, in the MOD board meeting the defense minister S. Shoigu announced that the objectives of the Zapad exercise were achieved\textsuperscript{181}. Russia not only checked all its procedures until the end, but, at the same time, sent a message to the West stating that it was ready “to cross the Rubicon” and to use massive nuclear strikes. Time will tell whether this will become an annual Russian response to the USA nuclear triad exercise “Global Thunder”\textsuperscript{182}.

Summarizing everything that happened during this stage, we see that the prevailing offense, presented in the earlier stages, was substituted by wide-scale defense mostly done by conventional forces and counter-offense as soon as the advancing forces had been stopped. The defense was supported less from the air and PLRGMs, but seldom were nuclear strikes exercised, and forces did show they were prepared to handle the enemy’s nuclear response. A great variety of other state forces, agencies or institutions were involved in real activities for different reasons. The amount of forces participating in the third stage was difficult to estimate. Nevertheless, counting only the figures from the MOD, there were more than 27,000 soldiers, around 2,000 combat and other equipment, 130 air frames and 50 ships were involved in all the above-mentioned activities (see Table 3). We can only guess how many troops and equipment from other institutions were involved. The question of whether we should count the evacuated civilians as participants of the exercise remains open to discussion.

Table 3. Zapad, 2017 September, likely the 3\textsuperscript{rd} “Massive Defense” stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>JSC</th>
<th>Unit/ Location</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEP 12</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td>Strategic missiles OC</td>
<td>? 1 ballistic missile</td>
<td>Defense/Offense, Ballistic missile test</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 13–?</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>Signal troops in Kaliningrad</td>
<td>+400S +30ME</td>
<td>Establish and maintaining overall C2</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 13</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11\textsuperscript{th} Co, 79\textsuperscript{th} MBr or 7\textsuperscript{th} MR</td>
<td>+1000S/ +100 ME +4 Ai and H</td>
<td>Defense and counter attack</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, synchronized, matching actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{180}“Путин на учениях в четверг запустил четыре баллистические ракеты”, Москва, РИА Новости, 26 10 2017.

\textsuperscript{181}А. Тихонов, “Факторы роста обороноспособности”, Красная звезда, 29 10 2017


\textsuperscript{182}This year the annual US nuclear triad exercise Global Thunder 2018 started on the 30\textsuperscript{th} of October.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>JSC</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEP 13</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>SOF units Tambov</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Defense/Offense Landing in the rear, reconnaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Co Air defense</td>
<td>+100S +10Ai</td>
<td>Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>6th Air OC Strat aviation OC</td>
<td>+700S +20Ai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Tank OC, 4th tdV 6th TBr Belarus</td>
<td>+3000S +300 ME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14-18</td>
<td>JSC North</td>
<td>Northern fleet</td>
<td>+5000S +300 ME +30A +20 SS 10SM/30 SA</td>
<td>Defense. Ships leaving bases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14</td>
<td>JSC Rapid reaction</td>
<td>76th, 106th 98th Airborne Div</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Defense, Offense Counterattack/Reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14</td>
<td>JSC South</td>
<td>Black Sea fleet Syria</td>
<td>+100S 2 SM</td>
<td>Defense Launching CRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>OC Baltic fleet Naval SOF</td>
<td>+50S -2 SA</td>
<td>Defense Undersea diversion prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>11th Co, 79th MBr or 7th MR</td>
<td>+000S ? ?ME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>6th Air OC, OC Baltic Fleet Aviation Air defense, Fleet Aviation</td>
<td>+200S 20Ai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>ABC units Luga</td>
<td>+100S xME</td>
<td>Defense Camouflage</td>
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Officially not Zapad, obvious synchronization and matching actions.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Units/Equipment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>Luga</td>
<td>EW units</td>
<td>Defense EW Protection of Assets</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td></td>
<td>Signal Units</td>
<td>Defense Cyber defense of Communication</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 16</td>
<td>JSC West Luga</td>
<td></td>
<td>6th OC 25th + 138th MBr 2nd MDv 448th 26th MBr</td>
<td>Defense Counterattack Iskander and Tochka U launching</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC West Luga</td>
<td></td>
<td>JSC Logistic Br</td>
<td>Defense Recovery of battle damage, field logistics</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14-18</td>
<td>JSC North</td>
<td></td>
<td>Northern fleet</td>
<td>Defense against sea and air assault in the sea, artillery and cruise missiles shooting</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, obvious synchronization and matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC North Pechenga</td>
<td></td>
<td>Land forces</td>
<td>Defense Against naval landing</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, obvious synchronization and matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td></td>
<td>OC strat aviation</td>
<td>Defense/offense Strat aviation patrol Accident</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, obvious synchronization and matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15-17</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td></td>
<td>OC Baltic Fleet 25th CDB Kaliningrad</td>
<td>Defense against sea and air assault in the sea, artillery shooting, &quot;Bal&quot;, Bastion&quot; systems</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15</td>
<td>JSC Rapid Reaction</td>
<td>108th Air-borne Dv</td>
<td></td>
<td>Offense Raids in opponent’s rear</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 15-18</td>
<td>JSC West Luga</td>
<td></td>
<td>1st Tank OC, 2nd MDv 138th and 25 MBr, other units</td>
<td>Defense Artillery engaging opponent’s assault. Counter attack</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 16</td>
<td>JSC West Leningrad</td>
<td></td>
<td>6th Air OC Kaliningrad</td>
<td>Defense/Offense Two sided CAS and AAD activities</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 16</td>
<td>JSC West Belarus</td>
<td>Logistic units from JSC West</td>
<td></td>
<td>Defense Recovery of battle damage, field logistics</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 16-18</td>
<td>JSC West Luga</td>
<td></td>
<td>Army aviation units</td>
<td>Defense/Offense Helicopter ambush, CAS</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
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<td>Force Description</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEP 17-20</td>
<td>JSC West Belarus</td>
<td>1st Tank Army, 4th TDv and 6th T Br.</td>
<td>+-3500S</td>
<td>Defense and counter-attack after</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEP 17-20</td>
<td>JSC West Luga</td>
<td>JSC West Logistic troops</td>
<td>+-700S</td>
<td>Logistic and maintenance/ water purification</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 18</td>
<td>JSC RRF</td>
<td>Naval infantry Br. Pumanksi, Murmansk</td>
<td>+-600S</td>
<td>Defense Coastal defense</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 19</td>
<td>JSC Rapid reaction</td>
<td>76th air-borne Dv</td>
<td>+-500S</td>
<td>Defense/Offense counter attack, capture of airfield</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 20</td>
<td>JSC West</td>
<td>OC Baltic fleet</td>
<td>+-1000S</td>
<td>Defense/Offense defense against sea and air assault/ support naval landing</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 14-20</td>
<td>Topography troops</td>
<td></td>
<td>+-250S</td>
<td>Defense/Offense Improvement of positioning, navigating and aiming</td>
<td>Officially Zapad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 20</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td>Strategic missiles OC</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Defense/Offense Ballistic missile test</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, obvious synchronization and matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCT 26</td>
<td>JSC Nuclear</td>
<td>Strategic missiles OC Submarine forces OC</td>
<td>4 ballistic and X? Cruise missiles</td>
<td>Defense, Massive NUCLEAR STRIKE</td>
<td>Officially not Zapad, obvious synchronization and matching actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEP 10 OCT 26</td>
<td>Russian National Guard other forces</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Defense. Massive evacuation</td>
<td>Officially denied as being an exercise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL

* All numbers come from OS or recalculated/best estimate

Russia tends to abide by the principle to have military activities planned in detail. This means that for every military activity, including a war with an opponent in the West, it has detailed plans, which are checked and updated from time to time. Quite probably, while preparing its plans on how to fight in the West, some assumptions were made. At first, the use of armed forces would bear results only if troops act quickly, effectively and are able to secure achievements. And second, large numbers of casualties and loses suffered by the enemy or the expectation of these loses while fighting diminishes its will to continue fighting and motivates one to start negotiations. In Kosovo, the Zapad-99 and Zapad-09 exercises most probably assured Russia that the West was not able to respond decisively, so there would be time to prepare for new actions (or total defense). The cases of Georgia 2008 and Crimea 2014 also reassured Russia that, if negotiations did start, the gains achieved by military means could most probably be safeguarded.

Russia considers that the principles of detailed planning could be successfully used in recent wars. There were two in weak points of detailed planning, which became obvious in the past. At first, there was an enormous number of situations that could appear in a campaign and which required too much work to be done by officers. As a result, a lot of potential situations were left without due attention. Second, it took a long time to collect, receive and analyze information and to pass new directives on to troops. As a result, the reaction to any change was slow and/or any unforeseen changes usually led to the collapse of the operation. The Russian military assumes that recent technologies allow solving both problems. Computers and huge NDMC computing capabilities allow designing as many situations as one might need and to redesign them quickly if required. Technological progress in surveillance, communication and other fields allows establishing an overall C3 and C3I and employing modern ABMS. This makes it possible to not only update/correct/change plans quickly, but to pass directives immediately on to units in the field as well. In this case, having detailed plans and pre-planned potential changes available allows the country’s forces to act faster, more effectively and achieving the desired results without hesitation. Troops on the battle field have to concentrate only on how to quickly implement the pre-planned steps or the received directives and are free to improvise at the tactical level. Then the opponent is forced to waste time while continuously re-planning and coordinating plans with other HQs to respond to the quick moves of your troops.
Based on the analysis of all the Zapad exercises starting from 1999, one might state that a war with an opponent in the West or “Zapad operation” consists of three stages. To achieve success, the first two stages would be enough, but in a case of failure, all three would be required. Since 1999, Russia kept checking its plan, at first mostly theoretically, and only separate stages were exercised and later, since 2013 (after the end of the first stage of military reform and the appointment of S. Shoigu as the minister), practically and on a wider scale. Exercises following Zapad-13, such as Vostok-14, Centr-15 and Caucasus-16 were used to check separate elements from different stages. Zapad-17 checked them incorporated into one entire action.

Even though the Russian political military leadership stated it was satisfied with the Zapad-17 exercise, based on the information available, some planned actions failed and the set objectives were not achieved. Success was obvious in establishing an overall C3, but a lot still has to be done to transform it into a fully fledged C3I. Evident progress was made in EW, logistics and maintenance, rearmament and PLRGMs, navigation and testing of new arms. Contrarily, it was announced that Zapad-17 would test a mobilization (reserve) system, territorial defense\textsuperscript{183}, effectiveness of civil defense and involvement of federal institutions\textsuperscript{184}, but after the exercise there were not so many success stories regarding these trials.

It appears as if Russia undertakes strategic exercises not only as a tool to check plans and forces, but also as a strategic communication instrument that can have an impact on the existing security situation. Whether by accident or not, but the decision to emphasize one or another element during different official exercises was obvious. For example, Zapad-09 emphasized a tactical nuclear strike which could be taken as a strategic deception (deterrence) message; with the openness and transparency it exhibited in Zapad-17, showing its readiness for mass defense and the use of nuclear weapons, Russia sent a clear message not to push it “into a corner”.

And to conclude, the change in the military and other areas from 1999 demonstrates that Russia is not only declaring that it is in a league of its own, but is also trying to back such declarations up with action. In the military sphere, Russia maintains and develops a different (compared to the West and

\textsuperscript{183} Even though the commander of the 11\textsuperscript{th} Reserve Command Col. Jurij Shtondenko (Юрий Штонденко), was appointed, active participation of reservists in Zapad-17 exercises was hardly presented in open sources.

\textsuperscript{184} Russian President Decree No. 345 from 29 07 2017 authorizes the National Guard (Rusguard) to be involved actively in all military activities. Despite this, there are almost no messages in open sources about Rusguard participation in Zapad-17.
NATO) understanding about the way to plan and run operations and activities. This understanding is based on the philosophy of the Prussian General Staff. Since WW II, the West (NATO) has rejected this philosophy and it has almost been forgotten. Russia, on the other hand, exploits this aspect, therefore quite often its behavior is misinterpreted in the West and prognoses based on Western forecasting principles fail.

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