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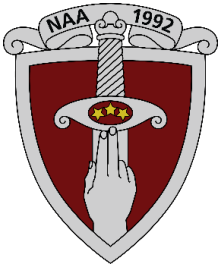
The Russian National Guard: A Warning or a Message?



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Dr. Zdzislaw Sliwa



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Zdzislaw Sliwa

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Zdzislaw Sliwa, Baltic Defence
College, The University of Lower
Silesia

National Defence Academy of Latvia
Center for Security and Strategic Research
Ezermalas 8,
Riga, Latvia, LV-1017
<http://www.naa.mil.lv>

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The Russian National Guard: A Warning or a Message?

Abstract:

The creation of the Russian National Guard was a surprise decision and led to broad discussion about the background behind it. Many internal security concerns were considered along with suspicions regarding the creation of more powerful capabilities for use externally. This paper analyses the current status, manning and equipping of the National Guard to recognize its capabilities in the context of tasks and options for its future utilization as an important part of the national security system. Private security and military companies are also considered as the former's legislation is dependent on the National Guard and the latter could be legalized in the future. Both possess manpower and capabilities that could be used for internal security purposes.

Key words: Russian Federation, National Guard, General Zolotov, international security.

Introduction

The National Guard, a recently created security organization in Russia, has attracted the attention of internal and external observers, who are investigating the reasons for its creation and its future utilization. There are various opinions on the reasons for creating the National Guard and these are related mainly to expected internal security breakdowns. According to official statements, the main reason was to enhance capabilities in fighting terrorism and separatism, but some observers saw its creation “as a reflection of Kremlin fears of possible anti-government protests amid an economic downturn” being an outcome of the “worsening social and economic situation in the country”¹. It is closely related to ongoing sanctions imposed by the West and changeable oil prices which influence the economic situation in Russia and its ambitions programme for the modernization of its armed forces. Moreover, the decision was made before the parliamentary elections in September 2016 and the future presidential elections in 2018. Both have been recognized as possible reasons for riots expressing the disappointment of citizens in the economic situation and which could be even more dangerous than the riots on Bolotnaya Square between 2011 and 2013. Looking back into history, it could be said that the Russian nation has had experience in creating successful

¹ V. Isachenko, *Russian lawmakers back creation of national guard*, The Washington Post 18 May 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russian-lawmakers-back-creation-of-national-guard/2016/05/18/bfb8c5b8-1d04-11e6-82c2-a7dcb313287d_story.html (accessed: 20 July 2016).

revolutions. This is why the Russian leadership has been unsuccessfully trying to push Europe to lift the sanctions on its degrading economy and is at the same time preparing a powerful National Guard to be ready to handle internal security. The threat of external influences was expressed in February 2016, when President Putin, while meeting officials from the Federal Security Service, said that “Unfortunately, our foes abroad are getting ready”², which referred to the threat of the so-called ‘colour revolutions’ which had taken place in the close Russian neighbourhood and in the so called ‘near border’ as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
‘Colour Revolutions’ in the vicinity of Russian national borders.



Source: A. H. Cordesman, *Russia and the “Colour Revolution”. A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West (Full Report)*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 28 May 2014, p. 31.

Anthony Cordesman explained it in the context of national military transformation, as “Russian military officers now tied the term ‘colour revolution’ to the crisis in Ukraine and to what they saw as a new US and European approach to warfare that focuses on creating destabilizing revolutions in other states as a means of serving their security interests at low cost and with minimal casualties. It was seen as posing a potential threat to Russia in the near

² *Russia election: Putin warns of ‘foreign foes’*, BBC News 26 February 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35671976> (accessed: 14 October 2016).

abroad”³. It has been linked with experiences arising from changes of regimes in the Middle East when the leadership was not ready and able to survive the public’s disappointment. These were lessons learned and identified by Russia which led to a desire to possess a variety of tools to ensure the continuity of governance of the country by the current elites. The options of an indirect and non-kinetic approach by the Russian Federation is reflected in the term ‘hybrid warfare’ or ‘new generation warfare’ which includes the parallel and coordinated use of conventional and unconventional means and assets to achieve a desired political – military end state. The latter term, among others, was promoted by General Valery Gerasimov⁴, the current Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, recognizing that an enemy also could use those types of operations against Russia. He highlighted this during the annual meeting of the Academy of Military Sciences, and “has called on leading military theorists and specialists as well as the defence industry and the government to jointly develop a ‘soft power’ strategy to counter the potential threat from ‘colour revolutions”⁵. He mentioned the need to develop a variety of soft tools supported by hard conventional power as a “‘coup’ in the colour revolution model is regarded by Moscow as a form of hybrid warfare conducted by foreign powers against Russia’s interests”⁶. Such ideas were also supported by the leading Russian military theoretician, Army-General Makhmut Gareev, the president of the Academy of Military Sciences.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the current status, manning and equipping of the National Guard which will allow for a recognition of its capabilities in the context of its tasks and future utilization as an important part of the national security system. Private security and military companies will also be considered as the former’s legislation is dependent on the National Guard and the latter could be legalized in the future. Both possess manpower and

³ A. Cordesman, *Russia and the “Color Revolution”*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 28 May 2014, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-and-%E2%80%99Ccolor-revolution%E2%80%9D> (accessed: 20 July 2016).

⁴ About Russian unconventional and so called Gerasimov model of modern warfare read in: “*Little Green Men*”: a primer on Modern Russian Unconventional Warfare, Ukraine 2013 – 2014, United States Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg 2016, p. 17-19 and 49-62.

⁵ Red in details in: R. McDermott, *Gerasimov Calls for New Strategy to Counter Color Revolution*, Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume 13, issue 46, 8 March 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/gerasimov-calls-for-new-strategy-to-counter-color-revolution/#.VuFxSfkrLRY> (accessed: 6 February 2017).

⁶ Red in details in: R. McDermott, *Gerasimov Calls for New Strategy to Counter Color Revolution*, Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume 13, issue 46, 8 March 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/gerasimov-calls-for-new-strategy-to-counter-color-revolution/#.VuFxSfkrLRY> (accessed: 6 February 2017).

capabilities that could be used for internal security purposes. The initial research based on the available data and formal documents allows for the construction of the hypothesis that the creation of the Russian National Guard (NG) was not an ad-hoc decision and was established to ensure capabilities for facing internal threats. It has been recognized as a tool to underpin the continuity of leadership of the current elites by nominating a trusted leadership for the NG which will follow orders and deny any attempt to start 'colour revolutions'. Nevertheless, the National Guard should not be disregarded as being an organized force for use in other than internal security tasks. The research is based on a study of the available data coming from a variety of sources including the official sites of the Russian Federation. The following theoretical methods have been adopted: a comparative analysis, a synthesis of source materials, and a critical assessment of the literature concerning the study area, as well as deduction and generalization. They have been used in conjunction with analogy and abstraction in order to undertake classification, opposing and comparing data, and compiling the results, and grouping and separating cognitive content. It has allowed for the identification of commonalities and divergent data in terms of the subject and object of research and the systematization of results obtained. The challenge has, however, been related to the available sources as the topic is relatively new, and there is a shortage of many manuals and books covering it in a comprehensive way. For this reason, the data published by credible and recognized experts and organizations, including think tanks, have been among the most important sources for supporting the analysis and allowing for the synthesizing of the the data and information.

The foundation and the responsibilities of the National Guard

The decision to create the National Guard was not an ad hoc decision and was based on analysing national experiences and solutions in other countries where similar type of forces had been playing significant roles as internal security providers as well. According to Roger McDermott "the process is the culmination of several years of intensive internal assessment and discussion in relation to Russia's strategic challenges"⁷. The previous President, Boris

⁷ R. McDermott, *Countering Color Revolution Drives Russia's Creation of National Guard*, Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 13 Issue: 71, The Jamestown Foundation Washington 12 April 2016.

Yeltsin, was already considering the creation of a similar structure in the early 1990s, with the head of his bodyguards, General Korzhakov, as the possible commander. However, Yeltsin was “a new president with a shallow political base and little loyalty among security circles”⁸ so he was not strong enough to implement the concept. The concept returned to life in the new internal and international security situation at the beginning of the 21st century. President Putin was, however, a much better established leader to make the National Guard (NG) a real security structure with proper leadership, manning, capabilities and tasks adjusted to face the new reality. The idea of establishing a National Guard type organization was a hot topic after the protests in 2011 against the ruling elites, and though the idea was not implemented, it was not totally forgotten. The decision to prepare such a unified structure was probably finally accelerated during that period and continued to mature quietly. Some commentaries⁹ link the decision of establishing the NG with a lack of trust towards the other security services, including the armed forces, and to members of the so-called political elites and economic oligarchs. However, as stated by Mark Galeotti “there is no real reason for creating the national guard out of the interior troops and other forces unless you have a serious worry about public unrest”¹⁰ and this could be one of the major reasons for pushing the idea forward. The statement is connected with an estimation that the number of protests within the country will be growing continuously every year.

The National Guard has received tasks related to territorial and border security and is linked with the underpinning of conventional forces, allowing them to focus on conducting military operations ensuring that the rear area, vital infrastructure and lines of communication are secured. Moreover, if a decision is taken to occupy any territories outside of the Russian mainland, NG units are prepared for the securing of critical infrastructure or to control the population etc., as is already happening in Crimea, and internally within Russia as well. In reality, it is the continuity of tasks previously performed by those units and now

⁸ *A Guard for Putin's Security*, 5 April 2016, STRATFOR Geopolitical Diary, <https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/guard-putins-security> (accessed: 26 July 2016).

⁹ STRAFOR opinion quoted in: W. Gordeew, *Stratfor назвал нацгвардию страховкой Путина на случай госпереворота*, Press Agency РБК, 6 April 2016, <http://www.rbc.ru/politics/06/04/2016/570504379a794717876a0984> (accessed: 26 July 2016).

¹⁰ J. Farchy, *Putin creates new national guard to seal his authority*, the Financial Times 6 April 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3f906d98-fc14-11e5-b3f6-11d5706b613b.html#axzz4BUa1CigU> (accessed: 16 July 2016).

organized under a new command and control structure. In that context, the current status of private security companies is an important factor, bearing in mind their control by the government, and their significant trained manpower, with many of their members having a military background. Such organizations could be another potential law enforcement factor to be used for internal security, as the country has a strong tradition of mobilizing and using all available resources to defend it against external enemies. This factor could be easily exploited when supported by proper management and an information campaign. Currently, there are three major documents located on the website of the Russian National Guard (Rus.: *Национальная Гвардия России* or *Rosgvardiya*)¹¹. The main document is President's Decree No 157 signed on 5 April 2016, and titled *Matters of the Units of the National Guard of the Federal Service of the Russian Federation* (Rus.: *Вопросы Федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации*)¹². It was approved by the Russian Duma, where the United Russia party (Rus.: *Единая Россия*) had a majority, holding 238 seats¹³, through a vote of 345-14, as the communist faction did not vote. The document established the basic rules for transforming internal security forces belonging mainly to the Ministry of Internal Affairs into units of the National Guard to create a federal body for the executive power. It included changes in the subordination of selected units from the Federal Service to the troops of the National Guard. Among them¹⁴ were authorities and units from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) responsible for the supervision of legislation in the field of arms trafficking and private security, including the Centre for Special Purpose Private Security, special units of rapid reaction forces and riot police from the territorial agencies of the MIA¹⁵,

¹¹ *Документы*, Официальный сайт федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации, the official Website of Russian National Guard <http://rosgvard.ru/dokumenty/> (accessed: 26 July 2016).

¹² The full text in Russian language available at: Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 05.04.2016 № 157 “*Вопросы Федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации*”, Государственная система правовой информации, The official internet-portal of legal information, Moscow 5 April 2016, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201604050058> (accessed: 26 May 2016).

¹³ *Фракции в Государственной Думе*, the Website of the Государственная Дума Федерального Собрания Российской Федерации, The Russian Federation State Duma (<http://www.duma.gov.ru/structure/factions/> (accessed: 20 November 2016). After September 2016 elections the United Russia is having 343 seats of 450 and it has constitutional majority.

¹⁴ “*Вопросы Федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации*”, *op. cit.*, para. 4.

¹⁵ Rus. *Отряды Мобильные Особого Назначения территориальных органов* (ОМОН) and *Специальные Отряды Быстрого Реагирования* (СОБР).

and the Special Operations Centre of Rapid Reaction Mobile Force¹⁶ along with aviation units from the MIA. Finally, the Federal State Unitary Enterprise ‘Security’ (Rus.: *Федеральное Государственное Унитарное Предприятие ‘Охрана’*), which is responsible for the physical protection of all types of property belonging to citizens, and being an agent for government protection, has joined the new security organization as well. Worth noticing is that the formerly independent services of the Federal Drugs Control Service (Rus.: *Федеральная служба Российской Федерации по контролю за оборотом наркотиков*) and the Federal Migration Service (Rus.: *Федеральная миграционная служба*) were subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs as a kind of compensation for Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev. It compensated for the ‘lost’ manpower under the minister of some 60,000 personnel and these were directly subordinated to vice ministers.

The main tasks of the NG are as follows¹⁷: to contribute, in cooperation with internal security forces, to the protection of public order and security and a state of emergency regime and to face organized crime; to participate in fighting terrorism and ensuring a legal regime of counter-terrorist operations; to contribute to fighting extremism; to participate in the territorial defence of the Russian Federation; to protect important state infrastructure and special cargoes recognized by the government; to assist border authorities of the Federal Security Service in protecting the state border of the Russian Federation; to implement federal state control (supervision) over the observance of Russian legislation in the field of arms trafficking and private security activities, as well to supervise private security companies. The tasks listed above are basically related to internal security, but they are also linked to external threats which should be eliminated before entering Russia. An example is the Russian participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which declares that “member States shall engage in close cooperation with a view to the implementation of the Shanghai Convention on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism”¹⁸.

The SCO regularly conducts exercises related to fighting the “three devils” and each nation sends troops from their armed forces and security services. Therefore, the National

¹⁶ Rus. *Центр Специального Назначения Сил Оперативного Реагирования и Авиации (ЦСНСОР)*.

¹⁷ “*Вопросы Федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации*”, op. cit, para. 6.

¹⁸ *Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Shanghai 15 June 2001, para 8.

Guard will be, following its area of responsibility, a very suitable security organization for taking part in future SCO exercises, especially as some of its newly subordinated troops have previously been involved. Troops from the Ministry of Internal Affairs were often an important component of units exercising in close coordination with conventional forces within the series of SCO “Peace Mission” exercises and other multilateral and bilateral anti-terrorist exercises. It could enhance cooperation, not only among Russian security forces, but also with services from Central Asian countries and China, as terrorism, separatism and extremism are a common threat for all of them. Moreover, it could also be an opportunity to train together with the border guard of the nations mentioned above, as the Central Asian borders are very poorly protected and full of gaps, allowing large-scale illegal smuggling of drugs, people, and arms, from South Asia to Russia as the final destination. The borders also provide an opportunity for radical and separatist organizations to sneak into Russia, which is a security factor which supports proponents of ‘colour revolutions’.

Cooperation with similar organizations in other countries is predicted and supported by the President’s decree “to counteract in compliance with international treaties and legislation of the Russian Federation, with the competent bodies of foreign states and international organizations in the established spheres of activity” and “organize on a paid or gratuitous basis the training of personnel for the law-enforcement agencies of foreign states”¹⁹. Such cooperation has already begun, with an example being the *Cooperation 2016* joint anti-terror exercise, held from 3 to 14 July 2016, in the suburbs of Moscow and in Smolensk Oblast with the participation of the Chinese People’s Armed Police Force (CPAPF) and the Russian National Guard. The main participants were the CPAPF’s ‘Snow Leopard’ and ‘Falcon’ commando units and the NG’s ‘Vityaz’ unit. The joint drills are to be continued based “on the two countries’ comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination”²⁰. It is an opportunity to

¹⁹ *Russia’s National Guard to interact with counterparts from other countries*, TASS Russian News Agency, 11 April 2016, <http://tass.ru/en/politics/868828> (accessed: 4 October 2016).

²⁰ Editor: Huang Jin, *China, Russia kick off joint anti-terror exercises*, People’s Daily Online 4 July 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0704/c98649-9081138.html> (accessed: 3 November 2016). *Закрытие российско-китайской комплексной тактико-специальной тренировки «Сотрудничество-2016»*, the official Website of Russian National Guard 14 July 2016 <http://rosgvard.ru/zakrytie-rossijsko-kitajskoj-kompleksnoj-taktiko-spetsialnoj-trenirovki-sotrudnichestvo-2016/> (accessed: 3 November 2016).

observe each other and to share experiences toward common security challenges endangering their ruling parties.

The NG's tasks reveal some similarities with the Russian Military Doctrine published in December 2014²¹. It is related to threat perception, as the doctrine recognizes internal threats as those linked with: activities aimed at changing the constitutional system of the Russian Federation by force, destabilizing the domestic political and social situation in the country, disrupting the functioning of state administration bodies, important state and military facilities, and the information infrastructure of the Russian Federation, the activities of terrorist organizations and individuals, subversive information activities against the population, and provoking inter-ethnic and social tensions, extremism, and stirring up ethnic and religious hatred or enmity²². The next aspect is linked with the core tasks of the armed forces, as mentioned in paragraph 32 of the 'Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation', among them²³:

- h) to protect and defend important state and military facilities, facilities on communication lines and special cargoes;
- k) to participate in peacekeeping operations to maintain (restore) international peace and security, to take measures to avert (eliminate) threats to peace, and to suppress acts of aggression (violation of peace) on the basis of decisions of the UN Security Council or other bodies authorized to adopt such decisions in accordance with international law;
- n) to combat terrorism in the territory of the Russian Federation and suppress international terrorist activities outside the Russian Federation;
- o) to prepare for carrying out territorial defence and civil defence measures;
- p) to participate in law enforcement activities and in ensuring public security.

²¹ The paragraphs discussed in the text are linked with: *Военная доктрина Российской Федерации*, Moscow 25 December 2014, Website of the: *Совет Безопасности Российской Федерации*, The Security Council of the Russian Federation, para 13; 21 r, t; 32 z, l, o, p, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/18/129.html> (accessed: 1 September 2016).

²² *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, Moscow 25 December 2014, translation from Russian, retrieved from Website of the Embassy of the Russian Federation, Press Releases, London 29 June 2015, para 13, <http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029> (accessed: 3 September 2016).

²³ *Ibid.*, para 32.

Among these major tasks for the armed forces, which are linked with deterring and preventing military conflicts, are those related to fighting international terrorism and participation in international peacekeeping operations under the UN flag. These latter tasks could easily be fulfilled by the National Guard within its area of responsibility and based on the capabilities it has developed and the equipment it possesses. Such operations are quite visible internationally providing prestige for the service conducting them, and consequently supporting the role of that service inside the Russian security architecture. This is worthy of attention for improving the distinguishability and visibility of General Zolotov's troops.

The majority of the tasks mentioned are linked with the NG and will require a revision of tasking and a clear division of areas of responsibility for both security organizations to avoid any confusion in their competencies and to avoid a duplication of duties. The last task mentioned, which is related to the use of armed forces to contribute to law enforcement, is currently the major focus of the NG. If it were to be the core assignment for the NG, it would be a good decision as the military could focus on preparing and conducting operations, as the use of the armed forces for internal security purposes could cause a lack of trust toward them and a destabilization of the country. The NG contribution to the territorial defence of the Russian Federation would significantly expand overall Russian combat power, as it would release the armed forces from such duties, allowing units to be used for pure operational tasks. It would also contribute to better coordinated protection of critical infrastructure, and conventional manoeuvre units again, would not be dealing with these secondary tasks. It is, however, causing some competition between commanders of the NG, the armed forces and other security structures, as they are being asked to prove that they are useful and reliable toward the national leadership. The fate of the directors of the Federal Drugs Control Service and the Federal Migration Service indicated that the prominent positions could be lost one day. A similar destiny was suffered by Sergei Ivanov, Putin's Chief of Staff, with the comment being made that "Putin is gravitating toward those who serve him, and distancing himself from those who, by virtue of their resources, attempt to rule alongside Putin," and "he does not need advice, he needs people who will carry out his orders with as little fuss as possible"²⁴.

²⁴ N. MacFarquhar, *Putin Dismisses Sergei Ivanov, a Longtime Ally, as Chief of Staff*, The New York Times, 12 August 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/13/world/europe/sergei-ivanov-putin-russia.html?_r=0 (accessed: 16 October 2016).

In that context, the nomination of Viktor Zolotov as NG commander and the replacement of important persons could be a part of “another trend in recent appointments, with Mr. Putin naming former bodyguards and intelligence agents to important political posts, such as regional governors” as it ensures their “unquestioning loyalty”²⁵. However, it is also possible that Ivanov will be back in among the elites, being selected for another position.

Furthermore, some of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation’s (FSB; Rus.: *Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации*) tasks are similar to the new areas of responsibility of the NG. This includes fighting organized crime, corruption, and the illegal weapons trade in coordination with other organizations. It automatically requires a revision of the law to clarify responsibilities and authority, along with ensuring a willingness to share information to avoid competition resulting from a desire to achieve better results²⁶. Other important shared tasks are related to fighting terrorism, as it is one of the major threats for the country, and contribution to the protection of the national border. The FSB is responsible for the security of the armed forces, internal security forces and other military type organizations, so it also includes the NG. The FSB has the Special Operations Centre (Rus.: *Центр специального назначения ФСБ России*), responsible mainly for fighting international terrorism, within its structure. In 2010, former President Medvedev expanded the power of the FSB by decree to allow “the heads of the agency’s bodies or their deputies to issue warnings to citizens on actions that could lead to committing crimes, the preliminary investigation of which refers legally to the competence of the FSB”²⁷. It is a very powerful organization with a director who has been in the position for nine years, proving that he is trusted by Putin. As a result, the FSB will not be ready to give up some assignments as it could influence limitations to its budget and manpower for the benefit of NG.

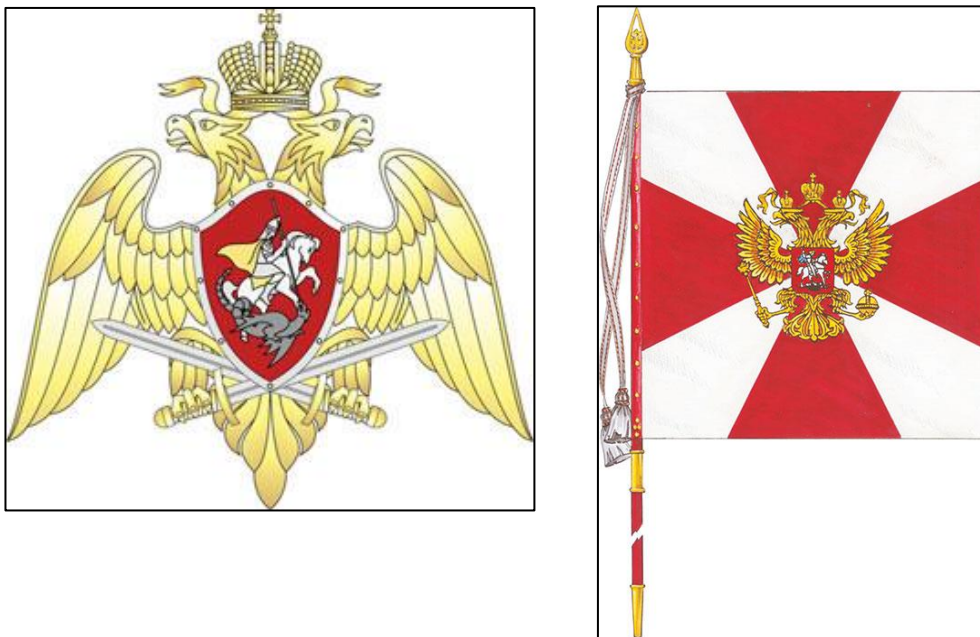
²⁵ N. MacFarquhar, *Putin Dismisses Sergei Ivanov, a Longtime Ally, as Chief of Staff*, The New York Times, 12 August 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/13/world/europe/sergei-ivanov-putin-russia.html?_r=0 (accessed: 16 October 2016).

²⁶ *Положение о Федеральной Службе Безопасности Российской Федерации и Ее Структуры, утверждено Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 11 августа 2003 г. № 960*, the Website of the Federal Security Service, <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/more.htm%21id%03D10343058%04ofsbNpa.html> (accessed: 3 September 2016).

²⁷ S. Borisov, *Medvedev expands FSB powers*, RT “TV-Novosti” 29 July 2010, <https://www.rt.com/politics/duma-fsb-bill-powers/> (accessed: 3 September 2016).

The process of creating a new security related entity has included symbols to make it clearly distinguished and recognized within society. To achieve this, the NG has received emblems to strengthen its identity and recognition as a separate organization. The emblems have been developed by a specially organized commission led by Major General Jurij Marceniuk. As shown in Figure 2, the proposed emblem is full of important symbols linking the service with internal security forces, but also with a military background.

Figure 2.
The emblem and the flag of the National Guard



Source: На эмблеме Нацгвардии будет изображен двуглавый орел, Interfax.ru 31 May 2016, <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/510959> (accessed: 1 September 2016).

General Marceniuk said that “the crown at the top of the logo indicates the fact that the Federal Service of the National Guard is a federal body of executive power. The shape repeats the crown of the Russian empire from the 18th-20th centuries, which was used on the *shako* of the first units of the internal guard”²⁸. Three elements have been approved by the Heraldic Council under the President of the Russian Federation, namely: the emblem, flag and banner of the National Guard and the personal banner of the Commander of the National Guard. The symbols were recognized as an important factor, as they are not only related to history but are also an element to integrate the new service and to augment its distinctiveness and

²⁸ В Росгвардии рассказали о разработке символики службы, Лента.Ру, 31 May 2016, <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/05/31/emblem/> (accessed: 1 September 2016).

independent status with respect to the armed forces and other ministries. It is also a reminder of the Russian Empire which was one of the major European powers in the past and a reminder of its global reach during the Soviet era. It is prompting sentiment to recreate the Russian Federation as a global power.

There are some small identity related factors, with the establishment of NG day – 27 March, in remembrance of the creation of an Internal Guard by Tsar Alexander I on 27 March 1811, being considered. The identity issue has been continued with the NG's magazine, titled 'In the Line of Duty' (Rus.: *На боевом посту*). To create its future leadership, the M. A. Sholokhov Moscow Presidential Cadet School of the National Guard was subordinated to the NG.²⁹ It was created on 1 January 2016, to prepare cadets to perform national service duties in a variety of positions and the NG will now be a priority employer. Professional education is provided by four military institutes of the NG located in Novosibirsk, Saratov, Saint Petersburg and Perm. They are providing specialized education for officers in the required specialization and as many as 800 NG officers will have completed their education in 2016.

Following the decision to create the National Guard, significant capabilities have been unified under one commander who is directly subordinated to the President of the Russian Federation. What is important is that the NG did not have to be created from the very beginning, so there is a lot of time to integrate the new forces to be ready to act when required. All newly subordinated units had command and control bodies, with internal organizational structures and trained personnel. It was already able to conduct the first large scale joint National Guard and police exercise in Lyubertsy in Moscow Oblast on 7 April 2016. It was executed just two days after "President Vladimir Putin made a surprise announcement"³⁰ about the creation of the NG, revealing the capabilities of the troops and their readiness to act against protestors. It included well trained and equipped troops, mounted units, special

²⁹ *Московское президентское кадетское училище имени Михаила Александровича Шолохова внутренних войск Министерства внутренних дел Российской Федерации*, The Website of the Moscow Presidential Cadet School of the National Guard <http://mpku-vv.ru/default/fa99aabb-2fcc-4632-b891-31674a2d7d84> (accessed: 18 January 2017).

³⁰ R. Standish, *Watch: Russian National Guard Practices for a 'Moscow Maidan'*, the Foreign Policy 8 April 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/08/watch-russian-national-guard-practices-for-a-moscow-maidan/> (accessed: 3 September 2016).

vehicles and aviation as well. The video³¹ of the exercises was released onto the internet by Khodorkovsky's *Open Russia* foundation and commented on by the international press. The exercise was also a proof that a decision about activating the NG had been made way ahead of its announcement and that it had been well staffed organizationally and legally. It was no surprise for the selected key leadership and close associates of the president.

The process of developing the NG has not yet been completed. There have even been informal discussions about the name of the organization as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, for example, suggested naming it the "gendarmerie", while the Financial Times, looking back at history, called it the "Praetorian Guard on steroids"³². So, there is continuity of effort in making it a reliable element of the security architecture, that is both dynamic and led by a very experienced leadership. It is meant to be continued, and as it is important to President Putin, resources will be provided even at the expense of other *siloviki*. According to General Zolotov, reform will take some time and will be divided into three stages. The first stage was completed by subordinating all the required units under his command. The next two stages of the establishment of *Rosgvardiya* will focus on the full development and necessary adjustments to organizational and staff structures and finalizing organizational arrangements, including legal aspects³³. The revision process for the legal status of the NG will take place based on the need to better coordinate the duties of other security services. In April 2016, the Russian Federal Chamber of Lawyers sent a letter to the then Chairman of the State Duma, Sergey Naryshkin, seeking to limit the powers of the National Guard to use special means specified according to law for the police e.g. right to enter private property to prosecute suspected persons³⁴. The NG also has the right to seal off areas to fight mass riots, "block cars and pedestrians in extraordinary situations and use citizens' motor vehicles to come to the scene of an extraordinary event or chase criminals", "temporarily prohibit or restrict the traffic of motor vehicles or pedestrians on streets and roads, carry out their inspection for the purposes

³¹ See: *Secret drills of Moscow police on suppression of mass protests*, Youtube, released 10 April 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpmEVR3Fr-c> (accessed: 24 July 2016).

³² J. Farchy, *Putin creates new national guard to seal his authority*, *op. cit.*

³³ *На эмблеме Нацгвардии будет изображен двуглавый орел*, Interfax.ru 31 May 2016, <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/510959> (accessed: 1 September 2016).

³⁴ *Федеральная палата адвокатов России попросила ограничить полномочия Нацгвардии*, Lenta.ru 28 April 2016, https://lenta.ru/news/2016/04/28/mnogo_vato/ (accessed: 1 September 2016).

of protecting the life, health and property of citizens”, and NG servicemen can check citizens’ documents and detain them, which is similar to the role of the police³⁵. In general, legislation will require a closer look to avoid misunderstandings in relation to responsibilities, but now there will be another organization which can control citizens for internal security reasons.

Leadership of the National Guard and capability building

Decree No 157 established the functions of the Federal Service of National Guard Service’s Director and National Guard Forces Commander. On the same day, 5 April 2016, the President nominated General Viktor Zolotov for the position by Decree No 158 (Rus.: *О директоре Федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации – главнокомандующем войсками национальной гвардии Российской Федерации*)³⁶. General Zolotov’s status was strengthened significantly as he became a member of Russia’s Security Council by Decree No 159 (Rus.: *О внесении изменения в состав Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации, утвержденный Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 25 мая 2012 г. № 715*)³⁷. The effect of this was that the general became one of the key persons responsible for internal security and “he will report directly to President Putin, bypassing the interior minister”³⁸. General Zolotov has been working closely with President Putin as the head of his security since the mid-1990s and is among the most trusted people from his inner circle. He was the first deputy of the MIA from May 2014 and one of his main responsibilities was linked with the modernization of internal security troops and the improvement of the organizational structure. It was probably a pre-condition for their making a smooth transition to becoming subordinate to him as NG Commander, so the decision was well prepared and

³⁵ *Russia’s National Guard to interact with counterparts from other countries*, op. cit.

³⁶ The full text in Russian language available at: *Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 05.04.2016 № 158 “О директоре Федеральной службы войск национальной гвардии Российской Федерации - главнокомандующем войсками национальной гвардии Российской Федерации”*, Государственная система правовой информации, The official internet-portal of legal information, Moscow 5 April 2016, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201604050055> (accessed: 26 July 2016).

³⁷ The full text in Russian language available at: *Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 05.04.2016 № 159 “О внесении изменения в состав Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации, утвержденный Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 25 мая 2012 г. N 715”*, Государственная система правовой информации, The official internet-portal of legal information, Moscow 5 April 2016, <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201604050053> (accessed: 26 July 2016).

³⁸ *Putin creates new National Guard in Russia’ to fight terrorism’*, BBC News 6 April 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35975840> (accessed: 26 July 2016).

staffed. The appointment focussed more public and media attention on Zolotov and his private life. It was recognized that he was quite an established person, as according to the Anti-Corruption Foundation “family members of the newly appointed head of the National Guard, Viktor Zolotov, own real estate worth 663 million rubles (\$9.75 million)”³⁹. This is being investigated by the Foundation and also by the *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper.

The NG Commander has as many as six deputies directly subordinated to him, and the structure is similar to military command and control, with the chain of command being easily readable for the armed forces, allowing for better coordination at the appropriate level. On 28 June 2016, the very experienced Sergiej Melikov was selected as the First Deputy of the Commander and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in the next month. He has significant experience in fighting terrorism and armed opposition in Dagestan and the North Caucasus, and this is a signal that the security of those regions is considered to be a priority⁴⁰. On the 20 May 2016, newly promoted Lieutenant General Sergey Chenchik was appointed by Presidential decree to the position of Chief of Staff of the NG and on 27 May, General Zolotov introduced him to key staff members⁴¹. The leadership of the NG has had significant experience of commanding troops at a tactical and operational level and all of them have completed education at military academies, including the General Staff Academy of the Russian Federation’s Armed Forces⁴². It has provided them with a good understanding of military operations, allowing for the proper coordination of operations with armed forces in the case of military conflict. The change of leadership and nomination of new heads to the NG in the regions also took place and required regional consolidation of power and the building of relationships to improve coordination and trust towards the new organization. The new territorial leadership was announced at the beginning of October 2016, marking a new stage in the formation of the NG.

³⁹ *Family of Russian National Guard Chief Owns Properties Worth \$10M – Investigation*, the Moscow Times 07 April 2016, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/family-of-russian-national-guard-chief-owns-properties-worth-10m--investigation/565029.html>, (accessed: 19 July 2016).

⁴⁰ M. Vatchagaev, *Appointment of General Melikov to Replace Khloponin Points to Kremlin Bid to Subdue Dagestani Insurgency*, the Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor Vol. 11 Issues 92, 16 May 2014.

⁴¹ *Генерал-полковник Сергей Ченчик представлен личному составу войск национальной гвардии РФ*, the official Website of Russian National Guard, Moscow 27 May 2016, <http://rosgvard.ru/general-polkovnik-sergej-chenchik-predstavlen-lichnomu-sostavu-vojsk-natsionalnoj-gvardii-rf/> (accessed: 28 July 2016).

⁴² For details see biographies of the key leadership of the National Guard: *Руководство*, the official Website of Russian National Guard, <http://rosgvard.ru/o-vojskah/rukovodstvo/> (accessed: 26 October 2016).

As Zolotov's position has changed significantly, becoming one of the key actors within the security system, it has also influenced the balance of power among between the elites. Moreover, "that balance has shifted significantly over the past two years, generally investing more power in the *siloviki* – particularly the FSB, the army and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who heads what is essentially a separate *siloviki* structure in its own right"⁴³. The new 'player' is changing that balance of power, influencing relations between close associates of the President. It has also created competition between the key security leadership including Sergei Shoigu, who has been the Minister of Defence since 2012 and Aleksandr Bortnikov, the Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), who has been in his position since 2008 and, of course, the Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev. The formation of the NG also caused concern for the Chechen leader as he lost control of *siloviki* subordinated to him. Nevertheless, Kadyrov, when commenting on the creation of the National Guard, expressed his belief that Chechen soldiers would be honoured to serve in this new structure⁴⁴. In relation to Minister Shoigu, it is worthwhile mentioning that General Zolotov had already been promoted to the rank of General in the Army in November 2015, and from a military ranking point of view, those two are equal. Such a change could have an effect on some personal ambitions and the need to prove that all the key actors are still necessary and irreplaceable.

The final structure of the NG was approved by Presidential decree in September 2016 and included the NG command, seven districts linked with Russian federal districts, with some minor differences, and also the necessary lower level territorial units in the respective regions⁴⁵ (see Figure 3). There are also some units directly subordinated to the NG Commander as a rapid reaction division - the Independent Operational Purpose Division, also known as the Dzerzhinsky Division (Rus.: дивизия оперативного назначения имени Ф.Э. Дзержинского). An example of continuity in the building of the organization was extending the information centre into the Department of Interaction with Media and Civilian

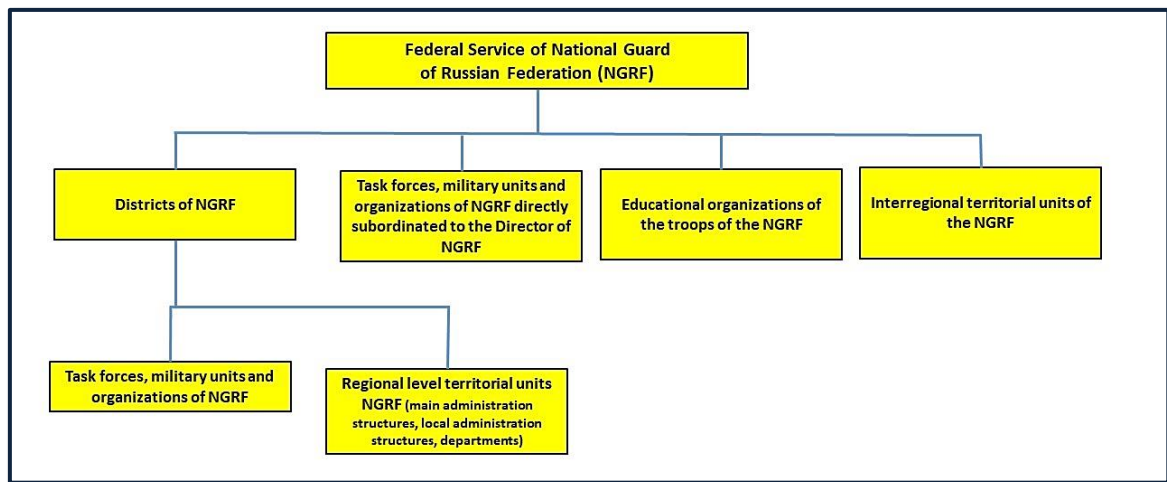
⁴³ N. Petrov, *How Putin Changed the Balance of Power among Russia's Elite (Op-Ed)*, The Moscow Times 15 April 2016, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/how-putin-changed-the-balance-of-power-among-russias-elite-op-ed/565755.html> (accessed: 27 July 2016).

⁴⁴ *Кадиров назвал честью для чеченцев службу в Нацгвардии*, Lenta.ru 6 April 2016, <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/04/06/kadyrov/> (accessed: 9 September 2016).

⁴⁵ M. Szewrygin, *Росгвардия определилась со структурой*, Парламентская газета 6 September 2016, <https://www.pnp.ru/news/detail/141483> (accessed: 11 November 2016).

Organizations (Rus.: Департамент по взаимодействию со средствами массовой информации и институтами гражданского общества -ДВСМИ). This was aimed at improving the visibility of the NG, to deliver updated and credible information about its role and operations, and to improve cooperation with governmental and local organizations⁴⁶. The total estimated 350,000 – 400,000 manpower⁴⁷ is meant to be subordinate to the National Guard Forces Commander and will include both servicemen on active duty and conscripts. To make the transition easier, soldiers subordinated to the newly created structure have been allowed to preserve their rank and specialisation, and according to Decree No. 157, they were to agree to be transferred to the new organization. They have also had their rights to accommodation and medical services along with family members preserved. This was important, as after the change in subordination, they were able to preserve all of their acquired privileges, being an element to encourage them to join the NG. The National Guard was presented during Victory Day in Moscow on 9 May 2016, along with the Russian Air and Space Forces. According to a statement by General Zolotov, troops from OMON and SOBR will receive the status of military personnel in 2018⁴⁸.

Figure 3.
The generic structure of the Russian National Guard.



Source: Структура, the official Website of Russian National Guard,
<http://www.rosгvard.ru/ru/page/index/structure> (accessed: 14 October 2016).

⁴⁶ В Росгвардии создан новый департамент по взаимодействию со СМИ, TASS Russian News Agency, 2 February 2017, <http://tass.ru/politika/3992167> (accessed: 8 March 2017).

⁴⁷ R. McDermott, *Countering Color Revolution Drives Russia's Creation of National Guard*, op. cit.

⁴⁸ Сотрудники ОМОН и СОБР в Росгвардии получают статус военнослужащих, Lenta.ru 25 May 2016, https://lenta.ru/news/2016/05/25/military_ng/ (accessed: 1 September 2016).

The process of re-arming the NG units is ongoing. The major type of small arm will be the modernized AK-74M, at least until they are replaced by the AEK 971 selective fire assault rifle and the AK-12 assault rifles, to ensure a lower weight, better accuracy and reliability. The ongoing process of modernizing weapon systems in the armed forces is allowing for the provision of a lot of small arms to the NG to meet future needs. According to the Defence.24 portal, equipment like sniper rifles, light and heavy machine guns and automatic grenade launchers will be also provided along with armoured combat vehicles like the Ural-VV, 'Patrol-A' or the Federal-M armoured truck⁴⁹. The BTR-82W 8x8 wheeled armoured personnel carriers will also then be modernized for the units. These types of weapon systems, linked with the proper training, could allow the NG to fight as light infantry and to conduct a variety of tasks related to the protection of infrastructure, fighting small enemy groups and engaging terrorist organizations (Fig. 4). The GAZ 'Tigr', which is a 4x4, multipurpose, all-terrain infantry mobility vehicle which is being developed into new versions is interesting. Among these is a reconnaissance version and a vehicle equipped with radiation-chemical and biological protection capabilities. It is an indicator that the force is extending its ability to perform tasks related to combat operations including manoeuvring in contaminated areas, which is closer to war than fighting terrorists⁵⁰. Moreover, an effort is being made to develop and implement a training complex to allow for the preparation of servicemen for further exploitation and the utilization of the equipment possessed. This is a typical solution for making training more cost effective and for showing that the investment in the NG is not just a temporary solution, but a long-term force to support internal security.

The leadership, command and control, structural developments and weapon systems have been verified and improved during a variety of exercises at different levels and in differing environments to improve capabilities. Those are not being conducted in isolation, as the guardsmen are closely cooperating with troops from other ministries and services. They are part of a variety of military type competitions and such participation is increasing over time. In early June 2016, guardsmen-snipers took part in a very specialized competition called

⁴⁹ M. Dura, *340-tysięczna „Gwardia Narodowa” Putina. Działania także poza granicami Rosji*, Defence.24, 5 August 2016, <http://www.defence24.pl/424193,340-tysieczna-gwardia-narodowa-putina-dzialania-takze-poz-granicami-rosji> (accessed: 14 October 2016).

⁵⁰ *Росгвардия разрабатывает новую разведывательную машину на базе 'Тигра'*, TASS Russian News Agency, 7 February 2017, <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/4002170> (accessed: 8 March 2017).

“Snipers’ Line of Fire” (Rus.: *Снайперский рубеж*) as a part of a series of military wargames in 2016⁵¹. Six snipers competed individually, in pairs and as a team. It was a typical military competition where snipers from the West Military District won first prize, but the NG’s snipers came third proving that their skills were at a level high enough to compete with professional soldiers. It was not the only competition, and the NG participated in other competitions as well, with its representatives observing some events and being involved in providing security and technical support for others. A more complex exercise took place in the Chelyabinsk Oblast between 6-10 June 2016, within the *Lightning 2016* anti-terrorist exercise (Rus.: *Молния-2016*) in the territory of a fuel–energy complex belonging to the State Atomic Energy Corporation ROSATOM⁵². One of the exercises practiced was the coordination of all the services involved in the exercise and those involved with the National Guard as well: the border security services, the investigation services from the oblast, troops from the regional structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Federal Penitentiary Service, the Federal Medical and Biological Agency, military units from the Central Military District, services from ROSATOM and the municipal ant-terrorist committee. The exercise continued from 11- 29 August, and focussed on improving crisis management abilities as a system. The composition of troops and the trend towards integrating the National Guard with other security services by enhancing its capabilities, improving command and control systems, and continuing the training of teams and individuals is progressing quite quickly and continues the previous cooperation within former structures. However, the change in the subordination of many units to the new structure requires continuity in education and training to verify already existing systems, motivated by aspirations to make the new service a credible partner for other security related organizations

The exercises, arm-in-arm with the armed forces, will further improve capabilities for supporting each other in a coordinated effort and with a clear division in responsibilities. These operations are ongoing. For example, in August 2016, servicemen took part in 190 of a

⁵¹ Команда войск Росгвардии примет участие в Армейских играх в Хабаровске, TASS Russian News Agency, 2 June 2016, <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3333703> (accessed: 6 October 2016).

⁵² Спецслужбы проводят учения „Молния-2016” в Челябинской области, TASS Russian News Agency, 6 June 2016, <http://tass.ru/ural-news/3341391> (accessed: 6 October 2016).

total of 350 operations against illegal groups in the territory of the North Caucasus⁵³ and 5,500 NG troops contributed to security during Moscow Day on the weekend of the 10-11 September⁵⁴. The last task was an outcome of the fact that NG units possess many types of riot control equipment, for conducting daily patrols on streets and other duties. It was also a presentation of the NG's capabilities, readiness and a rehearsal before the parliamentary elections which were to happen just the next week.

Figure 4.
Russian National Guard during an exercise.



Source: Photo www.rosgvard.ru. M. Dura, 340-tysięczna „Gwardia Narodowa” Putina. Działania także poza granicami Rosji, Defence.24, 5 August 2016, <http://www.defence24.pl/424193,340-tysieczna-gwardia-narodowa-putina-dzialania-takze-pozza-granicami-rosji> (accessed: 14 October 2016).

In mid-June and August 2016, the President decided to conduct a *snap check* of the armed forces. The purpose of the *snap check* was to verify the security of arms and hardware storage bases and to assess mobilization readiness, including capabilities for fulfilling tasks related to territorial defence. For this purpose, citizens who were reservists were requested to present themselves for duties⁵⁵. The manoeuvres were organized with the main focus being on the armed forces, but the tasks were not just related to them, as the security of

⁵³ *Бойцы Росгвардии в августе приняли участие в 190 спецмероприятиях против боевиков в СКФО*, TASS News Agency 6 September 2016, <http://tass.ru/politika/3597857> (accessed: 9 November 2016).

⁵⁴ *Более 19 тыс. правоохранителей обеспечат безопасность в День города*, TASS News Agency 10 September 2016, <http://tass.ru/moskva/3610699> (accessed: 11 November 2016).

⁵⁵ *Минобороны привлечет резервистов к внезапной проверке в ВС РФ*, TASS News Agency 14 June 2016, <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/3362505> (accessed: 3 October 2016).

infrastructure and territorial defence was supported by the NG, and these units were part of the *snap checks* to complement the armed forces. This was verified during the Caucasus 2016 exercise when the NG troops in the respective region were involved. Finally, many reservists from private security companies (PSCs) were checked as part of the reserve manpower pool. The complexity of the activities for enhancing NG capabilities has been part of a speedy process and is significantly improving its internal integration and external coordination with all other security services. It is meant to be continued with a high intensity, enhancing its readiness to face internal threats and to support armed forces. The NG could provide security in the rear areas when both offensive and defensive joint operations are being conducted.

Private security companies (PSCs) and private military companies (PMCs)

The National Guard has overlooked private security companies (PSCs; Rus.: Частная охранная организация) in the country, which are estimated to have up to one million personnel. As its competencies include the distribution of licenses for operations and firearms, they are an important means for controlling PSCs through the granting or cancellation of such certificates. In some cases, however, it could create opportunities for corruption and informal dependency between the official administration, the NG and private companies. In Russia, private security companies are responsible for the armed security of: infrastructure, people, civilian companies, a variety of businesses and transport etc. They are legal according to the existing laws. PSCs have created a very powerful force within the country, as according to the Interior Ministry, in 2015 “there are currently over 60,000 such companies in the country with about 700,000 employees,”⁵⁶ but the numbers could be even greater due to unregistered employees, and are growing every year. PSCs are organized and controlled by local authorities, which also control access to weapons, giving them a constant overview of their status, manning, and operations. In cases of emergency, these are assets which are available for facing crisis situations, within a legal framework. Moreover, in a case of war, the armed forces would receive recruits with basic military training in a relatively short time, who could be deployed for combat operations, manning those positions which do not require special

⁵⁶ *Government rejects bill to introduce private military contractors in Russia – report*, RT TV-Novosti 23 September 2015, <https://www.rt.com/politics/316276-government-rejects-bill-to-introduce/> (accessed: 12 October 2016).

training. This is linked with the assumption that many retired soldiers and officers, along with former personnel from law enforcement organizations, are employed by PSCs after their retirement, as they need trained and dedicated manpower.

It should be noted that, currently, private military companies (PMCs; Rus.: Частные военные компании) composed of mercenaries are not allowed according to Russian law. The difference, as compared to PSCs is that these could be directly involved in combat operations due to their trained and organized units, skills and equipment. Nevertheless, PMCs could be legalized in the country in the future, as even now they are considered to be a useful and capable tool by some commentators. In 2012, Alexei Mitrofanov from the *A Just Russia* Party said that “I believe that such companies are a way of implementing national interests without the direct involvement of the state,” with President Putin’s reply to that suggestion being, “Yes, I think we could consider this option”⁵⁷. PMCs are not new, as they have been used by many countries in the past and were very visible in Africa when fighting piracy, and in Iraq and Afghanistan. Another widely discussed case where PMCs were used was linked with the ‘Blackwater Company’ (currently known as ‘Academi’) which was used by the US in Iraq, and based on contracts worth millions of USD. In Russia, the issue, of course, would be control over such companies and the legal status related to their areas of responsibilities as well. Nevertheless, they could be employed by major national companies to control their infrastructure within the country and abroad, based on the special skills offered by mercenaries and their higher level of skills compared to PSCs. Already in 2013, *Gazprom* and *Transneft* had received legal permission to organize internal security bodies or “private armies”⁵⁸ to protect their installations and pipelines, using small arms and special equipment. Another option could be the deployment of PMCs to support the governments of other countries, thereby avoiding formal and visible deployment of armed forces, even for political reasons. Other areas of deployment could be the countries of Central Asia, Ukraine, Abkhazia, South Ossetia or even Afghanistan and the Arctic, and the Middle East in general. Finally,

⁵⁷ *Russia May Consider Establishing Private Military Companies*, Sputnik News 13 April 2012, <http://sputniknews.com/analysis/20120413/172789099.html> (accessed: 12 September 2016).

⁵⁸ «Газпрому» и «Транснефти» разрешили создать «частные армии», Полит.ру 14 June 2013, <http://polit.ru/news/2013/06/14/gazprom/> (accessed: 12 September 2016).

“PMCs could be a good way to offer retired servicemen new employment opportunities at a time when Russia’s Defence and Interior Ministries are planning to reduce their workforces”⁵⁹.

According to Foreign Policy, Russian mercenaries from the *Slavonic Corps* were already fighting Islamic State in Syria in 2013. Its successor, PMC *Wagner* “has been fighting major battles in both Ukraine and Syria – including battles of Palmyra”⁶⁰ as well, with some 900 mercenaries being paid 240,000 rubles a month (around \$3,500). They have been using small arms and heavy equipment as well, coordinating artillery fire and airstrikes. Compared to PMCs from other nations, the companies linked with Russia are well armed and have a variety of heavy weapon systems. *Sky News* also released a report and video claiming that Russian mercenaries were deployed to Syria. According to Pavel Felgenhauer, a military analyst, “the deployment of military contractors is consistent with the Russian take on ‘hybrid-war’”⁶¹. The PMC units were supposed to support the governmental Syrian Army which was suffering significant losses. The report also mentioned Molmino, a Special Forces base, where PMC recruits are trained, to highlight the close link with the Russian Ministry of Defence. The previous commander of the Hong Kong-based *Wagner* company was Dmitri Utkin, a retired lieutenant colonel, who commanded the special unit of 2nd separate GRU Specnaz brigade in Pskov Oblast. He has now joined the PMC Moran Security Group⁶². Mark Galeotti has highlighted the fact that “Moran is run by FSB veterans, and FSB officers were involved in recruiting for the corps”⁶³. He also claims that “the Donbas has been a testing ground for new state-controlled, but notionally private initiatives, ranging from the Vostok Battalion, deployed in 2014, to a variety of other groups drawn from Cossacks, veterans, and adventurers, largely mustered by the FSB – or more usually, military intelligence, the GRU”⁶⁴.

⁵⁹ *Russia May Consider Establishing Private Military Companies*, op. cit.

⁶⁰ J. Miller, *Putin’s Attack Helicopters and Mercenaries Are Winning the War for Assad*, the Foreign Policy 30 March 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/30/putins-attack-helicopters-and-mercenaries-are-winning-the-war-for-assad/> (accessed: 12 September 2016). See also: *Они сражались за Пальмиру*, Fontanka 29 March 2016, <http://www.fontanka.ru/2016/03/28/171/> (accessed: 12 September 2016).

⁶¹ J. Sparks, *Revealed: Russia’s ‘Secret Syria Mercenaries’*, Sky News 10 August 2016, <http://news.sky.com/story/revealed-russias-secret-syria-mercenaries-10529248> (accessed: 12 October 2016).

⁶² The Moran Security Group is also managed by former military officers. See Website - <http://moran-group.org/en/about/index> (accessed: 12 September 2016).

⁶³ M. Galeotti, *Moscow’s Mercenaries in Syria*, War on the Rocks 5 April 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/04/moscows-mercenaries-in-syria/> (accessed: 12 September 2016).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The PMCs, if legalized, could be used very effectively within a ‘hybrid warfare’ concept avoiding the involvement of regular units of armed forces. This already took place in Ukraine when according to the law ‘Regarding the State Service of the Russian Cossacks’, Cossack units were engaged in⁶⁵: the prevention and elimination of emergency situations of natural disasters, civil and territorial defence, the protection of public order, the protection of borders and the fight against terrorism and were used in Ukraine. Other PMCs known in Russia (see Fig. 5) are, for example: RSB-Group, Anti-Terror, MAR, ATK Group, Center R and others⁶⁶. These PMCs are operated by experienced former military personnel, often with a Special Forces background, and have well trained personnel who could be used in a variety of operations.

Figure 5.
Russian private military companies (visualization).



Source: *Russian Private Military Companies As Licensed Tool of Terror*, InformNapalm 24 November 2015, based on article by Vyacheslav Gusarov (‘*Information Resistance*’), translated by Stepan Grishin <https://informnapalm.org/en/russian-private-military-companies-as-licensed-tool-of-terror/> (accessed: 14 January 2017).

As suggested by commentators, there are still links with national security organizations like the FSB, GRU and special forces, as they are providing the training, contracts, money and

⁶⁵ Review of article by V. Gusarov, a security expert of ‘Information Resistance’ group. See: *Russian Private Military Companies As Licensed Tool of Terror*, <https://informnapalm.org/en/russian-private-military-companies-as-licensed-tool-of-terror/> (accessed: 12 January 2017).

⁶⁶ Read more in: *Russian Private Military Companies As Licensed Tool of Terror*, op. cit.

weapons. PMCs could be used as an element in underpinning armed forces in the case of a war against the Russian Federation, being a source of reserve forces. Their peacetime activities provide them with constant training and knowledge about other PMCs and military structures, and they could be used to support military operations along with regular units. The key advantages are the PMC's readiness to be operational in a short time, their experienced and well connected leadership, possession of weapon systems and their constant links with the military establishment. The power is also in their numbers, as according to the Moscow Times "Russia is ripe for entering the PMSC market, given the surplus of retired military professionals from its 760,000-strong army, not counting the other 300,000 young men who complete obligatory national service every year" and "we probably have more people who know how to handle a Kalashnikov than the U.S. does"⁶⁷. The future is not clear as the law has still not been implemented, due to the threat that the PMCs could not be fully controlled, but the formalization of their status, opening the way for storming national and international markets, is unavoidable. There is also opposition from the armed forces and the FSB, due to the threat that such companies would create an organization that was too powerful if it was unified, as it is estimated that manpower of some 500,000 would be created. They would also prefer to "give control over them to the Defence Ministry, which would use them as an immediate response to various threats"⁶⁸. The numbers mentioned are probably exaggerated, as not every person would meet military requirements and the law could also limit employment in PMCs'.

The combination of capabilities and the manpower of PSCs and PMCs should be considered when discussing possible manpower reserves to be mobilized and deployed in a relatively short time. That manpower could be utilized by the armed forces and the National Guard to enlarge their ranks. Moreover, many PSC members could be recruited by PMCs and some PMCs could be even 'hidden' under the legal umbrella of a PSC. This is a real factor, as according to *Military Balance 2016*, there are some 2 million reservists and a proportion of them are working in the companies mentioned above, so compared to many Western nations,

⁶⁷ A. Eremenko, *Blackwater.ru: The Future of Russian Private Military Companies*, the Moscow Times 12 November 2014, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/blackwater-ru-the-future-of-russian-private-military-companies/511056.html> (accessed: 12 September 2016).

⁶⁸ *Government rejects bill to introduce private military contractors in Russia – report*, op. cit.

the country has significant mobilization capabilities which should not be disregarded. The utilization of PMCs abroad also has a significant political aspect, as it allows them to claim that these companies are registered outside of the country, and, if required, that the national authorities do not know anything about such organizations, avoiding any political consequences. The manpower of the PMCs, well trained and tested in combat operations abroad, is valuable for the NG as after leaving their duties as mercenaries, they could join the guardsmen. The NGs' role in controlling PSCs is of great importance as it allows it to influence them during peace time and to possess full knowledge of their manpower, capabilities and tasks. It enables the division of local security related tasks, releasing the NG for more critical duties. The coordination could be achieved constantly at a local level between the NG and the leadership of the PSCs, supporting coordination and mutual support during crisis response operations and war. It supports another important aspect, which is the sharing of information between the NG and PSCs, which is especially important at a local level, providing updated orientation on any opposition-type endeavours.

Conclusions

The creation of the National Guard has many messages and warnings behind it. First, it reveals the decisiveness of national leaders in the consolidation of power and security structures under their direct control, allowing their use in a more consolidated way for internal security purposes. It is a strong warning to internal opposition, which though active, is still not united, that there are tools ready and available to face any internal attempts to influence future elections or to challenge the current political elites using “colour revolution” type methods to replace them. It is also a message to external actors that the new security organization will protect the current political elites at all costs and that there will be no room for them to undermine the existing system. At the same time, it is warning that the country is consolidating its security organizations, enhancing its capabilities to defend itself against any aggression from outside from any direction, although such a course of action is not likely in the coming decades. The improved consolidation of troops under the NG is linked with the modernization of the armed forces, and is a signal that modernized and boosted military capabilities can be fully dedicated to combat operations, leaving any internal security tasks to

the guardsmen. It has significant implications, for example, where combat troops are moved closer to borders and is especially visible in the Russian West and East Military Districts which border Ukraine and the NATO eastern flank. The new players on the security landscape with NG commander General Zolotov, are creating new elites within the security system sending a message to other players that they are not irreplaceable and should dedicate themselves fully to the current leader of the nation. So, for them, this is both a message about enhancing their loyalty and a warning in case of any attempt to launch a coup against the current system. The decision to create the NG as a consolidated force has many dimensions, and from a national leadership and security point of view, is showing decisiveness to ensure continuity in ruling the nation and a readiness to make a transfer of power in the future.

Opposition party leaders have expressed their support for the new force. Especially, the very radical Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who said that “the National Guard is essential to tame ‘any mutineers, revolutionaries and extremists’” and he “urged to recruit ‘young patriots’ in the new force and give them generous funds and ‘beautiful uniforms,’ so that ‘we don’t even hear such words as revolution, strife and revolt’”⁶⁹. It has also received support from the head of the Duma’s Defence and Anti-Corruption Committee, Irina Yarovaya from *United Russia*, as “an absolutely timely, adequate and systemic answer to modern challenges and threats”⁷⁰. Nevertheless, some opposition politicians, such as communist Member of Parliament, Vladimir Rodin, mentioned that there were cases of people questioning the current situation in the country and fighting with police, and that is linked with them asking for their rights. So, for Rodin, officials from the security forces seem to have convinced Putin to create a well consolidated and strictly controlled combat unit, but “this is a dangerous path. It is impossible to force people to return their confidence”⁷¹ in the government.

As to the reasons for creating the National Guard, they all seem reasonable to some extent, but we should not also exclude the fact that the country is preparing for something more than internal riots by the creation of this defence body. It could be a signal about enhancing its readiness for another challenge towards the West, but which may provoke a

⁶⁹ V. Isachenkov, *Russian lawmakers back creation of national guard*, op. cit.

⁷⁰ *Putin creates new National Guard in Russia’ to fight terrorism’*, op. cit.

⁷¹ *Для борьбы с внутренними врагами*, Независимая газета 6 April 2016, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2016-04-06/1_fight.html (accessed: 16 July 2016).

much stronger reaction this time than that in the case of Georgia or Ukraine. In this sense, when assessing tasks and capabilities, a direct challenge to the EU and NATO should not be excluded. The NG would be able to occupy any territory conquered by armed forces and pacify armed resistance there, along with controlling any disorder from the population. The issue for the NG is the need to still work out the necessary coordination procedures and standard operating procedures to establish clear and functional cooperation with other security related agencies. However, the positive aspect is that armed forces would be released from internal security tasks and could concentrate on a typical military focus – conducting joint operations to defend territorial integrity or to extend it. What is important is that the size and capabilities of the National Guard are quite significant and could also be used externally to provide security in newly occupied territories, e.g. in the Baltic States. It would allow for the armed forces to concentrate on the military aspect of defending new territories, significantly expanding the number of units available to do so. The decision is closely related to the overall reform of power structures and law enforcement agencies. It creates more capable forces, with an element of deterrence, but also indicates a capacity to challenge NATO and the current security setting in Europe. Although neither NATO nor China are considering any aggression against the Russian Federation, they have noticed the creation of the NG as a territorial defence force. For Beijing, it is a reminder of the role and capabilities of the People's Armed Police (PAP) as one of the key guarantors of internal security and the preservation of the leading role of the ruling party. These experiences have already been shared, as mentioned before, as the PAP is organized into internal security division, regiments etc. and could contribute to both internal security and defence operations on the Chinese mainland⁷².

Conceptually, the idea of creating National Guard forces as a supplement to conventional, active duty units is not new. They have been present in many nations for years. The US uses them for both internal security issues like controlling riots in emergency situations and neutralizing the effect of natural disasters, etc. The US National Guard has actively participated in all types of operations abroad as it is equipped with the necessary weapons systems allowing for the conduct of joint operations. There has been a reactivation and building-up of territorial defence forces in countries bordering Russia, especially on the

⁷² *The Military Balance 2015*, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Routledge, London 2015, p. 245.

eastern flank of NATO. Poland has made the decision to initiate a process for creating a Territorial Defence Force which will have about 30,000 troops. Estonia has about 15,500 members within the Estonian Defence League (Est. Kaitseliit), dispersed into 15 districts. Importantly, it is also supported by the “Women’s Home Defence (Naiskodukaitse), Young Eagles (Noored Kotkad) and Home Daughters (Kodutütred),”⁷³ with the total number extending to some 24,500 volunteers. The Latvian National Guard (Lat. Zemessardze⁷⁴) has 18 battalions in three defence districts with some 10,000 volunteers. In Lithuania, the National Defence Volunteer Forces are subordinate to a land forces commander and an estimated 4,500 soldiers are organized into 6 territorial units⁷⁵. The Russian National Guard structures and equipment are based on research in this area. The size of the formation is no match for its neighbours, as their territorial defence forces are very small, closely linked to their population, military budget and threat assessment. The Russian NG is directly subordinated to the President and with the particular leadership style, is in a good funding position when compared to other security organizations. The commander is also a well-established person and is recognized by the President as a trusted person, who will do what it takes to support the supreme commander. Although it is a new organization, it has had a very good starting position as it has been built upon already existing units and General Zolotov, having been in the MIA, had the time and the political permission to prepare for the smooth launching of the NG. There are suggestions that this is just the initiation of a new security system and that the next step could be the creation of a Ministry of State Security (Rus.: Министерство безопасности государственной Российской Федерации) based on the FSB. The name has links with the past and the tasks could be similar to those of the KGB as a major security agency. Another step toward improving security and looking to the future was the subordination of the Sholokhov Moscow Presidential Cadet School to the National Guard. A similar approach was undertaken by Minister Shoigu, who created the *Young Army* (Rus.: Юнармия России) on 1 September 2016.

⁷³ *Estonian Defence League*, the Website <http://www.kaitseliit.ee/en/edl> (accessed: 10 November 2016).

⁷⁴ See the Latvian National Guard Website: <http://www.zs.mil.lv/> (accessed: 10 November 2016).

⁷⁵ See the Lithuania the National Defence Volunteer Forces Website https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/structure_1469/national_defence_volunteer_forces_1357.html (accessed: 10 November 2016).

The creation of the National Guard supports the concept of the non-linear war, or 'hybrid war', as there is a recognition of the fact that in the case of hostilities, the whole Russian territory would be under attack, using a variety of capabilities. As such, having the consolidated organization nested in the Russian National State Defence Coordination Centre (NSDCC) is better for managing the coordinated effort of all security services. The NG will cover security for critical political, military and economic infrastructure and will be ready to contribute significantly to territorial defence in case of any attempt to endanger the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. It is already an instrument for supporting internal security in Crimea following tasks related for example, to border and infrastructure security, as OMON is very active there. In that context, private security companies could also support overall security as they possess trained personnel and a variety of special units allowing for real support on internal security issues. They could be a possible source of reserve manpower and join units of the armed forces and the NG. Russia has experience in how to consolidate their society and use all available resources to defend its sovereignty, as has been shown by history. Even now, memories of the national effort during the Second World War continue to be celebrated with demonstrations of its armed forces, reminding people of the country as a global player. This is also meant to inculcate a similar mindset among the younger generation to make young people ready to dedicate their lives and fate to the country, if the time ever comes.

The National Guard is a strong demonstration of the country's capabilities in preserving internal security and to deal with any opposition, in parallel with presenting enhanced capabilities to defend the country in the case of any attempt to attack it. The risk of such attack is low, but just by merging the armed forces, National Guard and PSCs (PMCs) together, territorial defence capabilities rise significantly and will be enhanced every year through better coordination, training and the delivery of new equipment. This last aspect is supported by the fact that Russia has a surplus of older generation military hardware and with the acquisition of new equipment, the options for arming the NG are growing. The challenge, however, is that the balance of power has been shaken in relation to the existing elite, so it will take some time to settle the relationships between key security figures. Moreover, the consolidation of National Guard structures at all levels of the national administration will take

time. It is not only about changing the top leadership, as the subordination of units in “terrain” will influence the established balance of regional power, and personal and organizational relationships.

The Russian civil defence mobilisation exercise in October 2016, which included some 40 million citizens, proved the importance of mobilizing the whole of society for a crisis or war regionally and nationally. In that context, there is value in creating the NG, as it is not focusing on a variety of MIA tasks, but on those related to improve internal security and underpinning armed forces in preserving national security. The value is that ‘non-military combat’ type formations are grouped into one entity and means that this type of capable power is united under one command and control system allowing for close supervision, unified training, and above all much easier and faster mobilisation in the case of any type of threat. It is further enabled by the short chain of command, avoiding any unnecessary interference by national bodies. It has a significant advantage compared to the democratic control of law enforcement and military services, as it ensures great speed in achieving readiness for actions. The preservation of a constant perception of threat to Russia from the outside keeping the NG at a higher level of readiness anyway, supported by properly designed propaganda conducted by state owned media and a lack of knowledge within society about the real situation outside of the country. This effective mixture is highly desired by the country’s leadership, but dangerous for whoever is defined as an enemy or a threat. It is particularly dangerous when similar quick mobilization and deployment capabilities in the West nations are lacking. This challenge has already been recognized as an outcome of the Warsaw Summit and has caused the deployment of a few battalions to the eastern NATO flank to enhance the deterrence factor. Nevertheless, the current status provides an advantage to Russia for the short and mid-term, however, in the long term, the country will face challenges in sustaining such an extended security posture.

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National Defence Academy of Latvia
Center for Security and Strategic Research
Ezermalas 8, Riga, Latvia, LV-1014
Phone: +371 6707-6881 Fax: +371 6707-6888
<http://www.naa.mil.lv>