



Russian Military Logistics in the Ukraine War

RECENT REFORMS AND WARTIME OPERATIONS

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Abstract

This paper examines the Russian military logistics system since 2010 with emphasis on its performance in Ukraine. It includes a detailed assessment of Russia's military logistics system based on major reforms introduced in 2010, highlighted by the merger of the Technical and Logistics Services into a unified material-technical services (MTO). Over the next decade, Russia's logistics system underwent further reforms including changes in structure, order of battle, command and control, and transportation and storage systems, to improve performance and better align logistics with the new brigade structure introduced after the Georgia War. Next, the paper examines the performance of Russian military logistics during the 2022 Ukraine campaign. Russia's MTO forces performed poorly during the initial invasion in part due to deficiencies in force design and doctrine and in part to the immense challenges presented by the initial invasion plan. Russian logistics fared better once the campaign refocused on the Donbas, which greatly simplified the logistics task. MTO operations had to adjust further after introduction of US HIMARS, which necessitated moving key logistics nodes further to the rear, and during mobilization, to accommodate the mass influx of new personnel. Despite many setbacks, Russian logistics has been generally successful in sustaining combat operations in Ukraine, while MTO leaders are now using lessons learned to inform future reform efforts.

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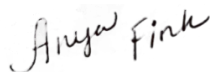
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Executive Summary

Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and its combat operations there have highlighted the challenges and adaptability of the Russian military's logistical and combat service support system. This paper examines Russian military logistics during operations in Ukraine in 2022. It begins with an overview of the logistical system, highlighting its history, approaches, structure, and ongoing reform efforts that have been underway since 2010. The second part of the paper focuses on the system's performance during the war in Ukraine, viewing military operations in several discrete phases. The final part of the paper focuses on how leadership and authoritative thinkers in the Russian military logistics community are discussing lessons learned from recent operations while highlighting evolutionary priorities for the logistical system, given Russia's enduring adversarial relationship with the West.

The following is a summary of our key findings

- x Even before the war in Ukraine, the Russian logistics and combat service support system was in a state of continuous adaptation, dealing with a wide range of organizational, capacity, and technical challenges. The structure of Russia's current logistics system has its origins in the major reform efforts launched in 2010. The highlight of these reforms was the merger of Russian logistics and technical services to form a unified material-technical services (MTO) organization. Formation of a unified MTO was part of the 'New Look' reforms launched after the Georgia War and were undertaken to better align logistics with the new brigade structure and other military reforms implemented at that time.
- x Other key highlights of the 'New Look' MTO reforms include the following:
 - o Creation of MTO bases and brigades within combined arms armies (CAAs) in military districts
 - o Efforts to modernize and reduce the number of types of logistics vehicles
 - o Transformation of the Railway Troops to improve their performance and technological base, culminating in 10 brigades connected to military districts
 - o Outsourcing of certain support functions (e.g., catering depot maintenance) to Oboronservis, a state-run corporation, which was later reversed because of inefficiencies and a major corruption scandal