

Zapad-2017: A Major Russian War Against NATO, Again

By [Mark B. Schneider](#)

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Zapad (West) 2017 is what the Russian call a “Strategic Exercise”; we would call it a major theater war exercise. Western estimates before the exercise were that 100,000 Russian troops would participate.^[1] The commander the Western Military District Colonel General Andrey Kartapolov noted, “The scope of today’s stage was great, about 600 kilometers at the front, and the forces completed tasks at three ranges at the same time.”^[2] Just before the exercise was completed, Ukraine estimated 120,000 Russian troops participated.^[3] Other estimates were in the range of 40 to 70 thousand.^[4] These estimates appear low in light of the extensive involvement of forces all over Russia and the large Kaliningrad garrison which was subject to simulated attack. Just after the end of Zapad 2017, *The Baltic News Service* and *Deutsche Welle* reported, “NATO believes that the suspicions regarding the size of the Russian-Belarusian military exercise Zapad 2017 were justified....The Alliance believes that Zapad 2017 involved a full range of Russian and Belarusian arms, including the Navy, submarines, fighter jets, tanks, artillery and intercontinental ballistic missiles.”^[5] Subsequently, *The New York Times* reported:

“In effect, these activities together constituted a single strategic exercise, involving the full spectrum of Russian and Belarusian military,” said Oana Lungescu, the NATO spokeswoman. That array included warships, submarines, fighter jets, helicopters, tanks and artillery, air defenses, anti-ship missiles, special forces, and short-range and nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missiles.^[6]

Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis stated, “What is important is that the simulation of an offensive from the Russian Federation toward all Baltic countries took place,” and that exercise activity continued near Lithuania after the notional end of the exercise.^[7]

In Russia’s first post-Soviet Zapad exercise, Zapad 1999, Russia’s Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeev said, “Our Army was forced to launch nuclear strikes first which enabled it to achieve a breakthrough in the theater situation.”^[8] In subsequent Zapad exercises, according to Simon Saradzhyan of the Harvard Belfer Center, “...the Russian military has repeatedly gamed out the use of strategic bombers to carry out such a demonstration nuclear strike during a number of wargames, including the Zapad (West) exercise...”^[9] These exercises, while nuclear, were defensive in the sense that they assumed a major NATO attack to which Russia, completely paranoid about NATO, responded with limited nuclear strikes after being unable to contain the

attack with conventional forces. For example, Zapad 1999 reportedly postulated “a NATO attack of 450 aircraft of the enemy’s tactical and strategic aviation and 120 guided missiles striking Belarus.”[\[10\]](#) While Zapad 2017 also apparently ended in an unannounced nuclear strike, it is considerably different because it appears to be in support of an offensive war against the modest NATO forces deployed to defend the three Baltic republics and Poland. The fictional nations supposedly supporting the “terrorists” were, in reality, weak NATO states that could not defend themselves much less effectively attack Russia. What was most noteworthy was that the initial attacks on Russia, which supposedly started the war, were relatively small and easily brushed aside by the improved Russian air defenses. The apparent nuclear attacks at the end of Zapad 2017 seemed designed to deter or prevent a NATO counterattack.

According to the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) on the first day of Zapad, “...air defense units of the Western MD [Military District] repelled simulated air attack in the Leningrad region. The radar crews detected more than 20 air targets flying in the immediate vicinity from a simulated air boarder (sic!) with turned-off transponders and ignoring the inquires.”[\[11\]](#) The only apparent purpose for an attack this small is to start the war leaving Russian and Belarus forces essentially undamaged and able to launch offensive action against the enemy forces assumed in the exercise, which appears to be the small regional NATO state forces.

The announced Russian scenario for Zapad 2017, supposedly an anti-terrorist/anti-insurgent operation, is literally an insult to our intelligence. The Russians are asking the West to believe that the large Zapad 2017 exercise was fighting “terrorists” who had infiltrated into Belarus and “merged into several large units each having a strength of up to 500 men for staging terrorist attacks and acts of sabotage.”[\[12\]](#) In reality, this seems to be a simulation of the four NATO battalions that have been deployed in an effort to deter a Russian attack. On September 18, the Russian MoD described the “illegal armed groups” as having “tanks and armored personnel carriers.”[\[13\]](#) This is ridiculous unless the troops were assumed to be from the American armored brigade (just delivered to Europe) or the Polish Army. Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania do not have tanks. It is clear that the attacking ground force was numerically small and such an attack was irrational if the objective was to win. Against it, the Russian MoD said Russia and Belarus deployed 12,700 troops with 250 tanks on the Belarus front alone. The Russian MoD numbers apparently count only the tip of the spear – they do not appear to count combat forces operating on Russian territory or at sea. Even so, the number of tanks committed exceeds the operational tank inventory of the U.K., Germany and France.[\[14\]](#) Even if we accept the manipulated Russian numbers, the Zapad 2017 exercise involved more than an armored division and used massive firepower against at most a few thousand enemy troops.

TASS declared, “To destroy the most sensitive facilities and command centers of the hypothetical enemy supersonic bombers Tupolev-22M3 carried out bombing strikes.”[\[15\]](#) A small “terrorist” force which had just infiltrated into Belarus territory obviously did not have “sensitive facilities and command centers,” but NATO states do. In addition, Russian forces employed nuclear-capable missile systems including simulated and live launches of the Iskander-M, the Tochka-U (SS-21) and the Iskander-based R-500 cruise missile.[\[16\]](#) British expert Roger [McDermott](#) has pointed out, “The Missile and Artillery Troops (*Raketnyye Voyska i Artilleriya*—RV&A), a Branch of Arms in the Ground Forces, serving as the primary means of destroying enemy forces by conventional and nuclear fires, were in action throughout Zapad 2017, rather than solely at

the end.”[\[17\]](#) The use of the R-500 is particularly ominous because its reported range is at least 1,000-km and possibly 2,000-3,000-km, allowing attacks deep into NATO territory.[\[18\]](#)

The more details the Russian MoD released (and it is clear they did not release much relevant information) about the military action during the exercise, the more absurd the “terrorist” scenario looks. According to *TASS*, “At the first phase of the exercise Zapad-2017, which began on September 14, the Baltic Fleet repelled a hypothetical enemy’s air raids and delivered an artillery strike against naval and coastal targets.”[\[19\]](#) Thus, we are asked to believe that “terrorists” have air forces, navies and coastal facilities. (Moreover, there are no possible coastal targets that are not actually in the territory of NATO states.) Furthermore, not only do the “terrorists” have a Navy, they have submarines. On September 17th, the Russian MoD stated that three Russian corvettes “successfully practiced repelling a hypothetical enemy’s air attacks and delivered an artillery strike on sea and coastal targets.”[\[20\]](#) On September 19th, the commander of the Russian Baltic fleet, Vice Admiral Aleksandr Nosatov, said that Bal anti-ship missiles and an anti-submarine warfare missile were fired at simulated targets.[\[21\]](#) The Russian MoD said the Bal missiles “eliminated a simulated ship detachment in the Baltic Sea water zone.”[\[22\]](#) British expert Roger [McDermott](#) has pointed out the Russians used “a variety of cruise missiles fired from air, land and sea.”[\[23\]](#)

The “terrorists” purportedly also had cruise missiles. Five days into the exercise, the Russian MoD stated, “The MiG-31BM fighters of the Western MD [Military District] intercepted cruise missiles launched by a mock enemy’s airplanes in the course of the Zapad 2017 strategic exercise....Earlier the MiG-31BM fighters were involved in repelling a mock air attack, intercepting more than 30 aircraft that were approaching the borders (sic!) of air defense area of responsibility.”[\[24\]](#) An attack by Russian Su-25 attack aircraft was defended by Su-35S, Russia’s most advanced air dominance fighter.[\[25\]](#)

On September 15th, the Russian MoD stated that Moscow and the Central Industrial District were attacked by the “hypothetical enemy” with over 50 targets detected in “a complex jamming” situation and were engaged by Russian air defenses.[\[26\]](#) In light of the distances involved and the powerful Russian air defenses, the only country that could possibly have launched such an attack is the United States, and to do so it would have had to deploy aircraft not now deployed in Europe such as electronic attack and stealth aircraft. This is a very interesting element of the scenario because it would have certainly resulted in a massive escalation of the war by the Russians. No details of the Russian response were given. Indeed, Russia did not mention any attacks on the air bases launching the attacks.

Not content with their use of jet fighters, cruise missiles, naval ships and submarines, the “terrorists attempted to use a car bomb.”[\[27\]](#) Just after crossing into Belarus, the “terrorists” supposedly captured an airfield which conveniently had “high-speed drones” which the “terrorists” immediately put into service and Russia had to engage them with ground-based air defenses.[\[28\]](#) The U.S. is currently the only nation in the world that has operational drones that could reasonably be characterized as “high-speed drones” and “high speed” may be an exaggeration.

The Russians were apparently wargaming an invasion of weak NATO states. In the words of the President of Lithuania, the Russian purpose in Zapad was “training its army to attack the West.”[\[29\]](#) As noted Russian journalist Pavel Felgenhauer has written:

One of the NATO aggressor states in the scenario—Vainoria—is physically located in the northwest corner of Belarus, adjacent to the so-called “Suwałki gap,” a territorial corridor on the Lithuania-Poland border that separates the Kaliningrad enclave (oblast) from Belarus. The location of “Vainoria” on Belarusian territory allows the military units participating in the war game not only to attack the simulated NATO aggressors but also actually to practice occupying “enemy” territory while in hot pursuit of the defeated invaders. This may possibly be a dry run in anticipation of a potential real conflict scenario in which Russia would need to breach the “Suwałki gap” and secure a land corridor to Kaliningrad by military means (Militarynews.ru, September 14).[\[30\]](#)

Current NATO forces near the Suwałki gap area are small. Before the exercise began, the Russian MoD told reporters, “About 12.7 thousand troops (including 7.2 thousand of Belarusian troops, about 5.5 thousand of Russian troops and 3 thousand of them – on the territory of Belarus), about 70 aircraft and helicopters, up to 680 pieces of military hardware including about 250 tanks, up to 200 guns, MLRSs and mortars, as well as 10 warships, are planned to be involved in the exercise.”[\[31\]](#) This is only a tiny fraction of the Russian forces actually committed to the war game which included the large Kaliningrad garrison, the Baltic Fleet, Russian forces deployed near St. Petersburg, other forces in the Western Military District, the Moscow air defenses, interceptor aircraft and the North Sea Fleet. This conclusion is not based on Western estimates of the size of the force but on Russian MoD descriptions of the military actions during the Zapad 2017 exercise, Russian press reports, and reports from observers of the exercise. For example, the 10 warships the Russian MoD announced in August turned out to be “20 ships and vessels of Russia’s Baltic Fleet” and the Northern Fleet exercise, which was clearly part of Zapad 2017, involved, “At different stages of the exercise more than 20 naval vessels, up to ten nuclear-powered and diesel submarines, 20 logistic ships and up to 30 aircraft...”[\[32\]](#) Thus, the Naval component of the exercise was about five times larger than the August Russian MoD briefing said it would be. According to *Izvestiya*, the portion of the Zapad 2017 exercise viewed by Putin near Saint Petersburg (not counted in the Russian exercise numbers), involved, “The servicemen of the Western Military District’s 4th Tank Army [as received; presumably 4th Tank Division, Kantemirovskaya], 25th and 100th Motor Rifle Brigades, 2nd Motor Rifle Division [Tamanskaya], Missile Troops and Artillery subunits, PVO [air defence], operational-tactical and army aviation, and VDV [Airborne Troops] airborne assault detachments [which] conducted large-scale training to repel the notional enemy’s aggression.”[\[33\]](#)

The bogus Russian description of the scale of the exercise is intended to manage NATO threat perceptions and to evade the legal requirements of the Vienna Document concerning observers and their rights. Russia wants to be feared but not to the extent that NATO beefs up its defenses or nuclear deterrent capability.

While there were only supposed to be 5,000 Russia troops (3,000 of them in Belarus) involved in Zapad 2017, on September 18th, the Russian MoD announced, “...4,500 paratroopers and nine

pieces of military hardware will be airdropped at a new limited platform behind mock enemy lines.”[34] The airdrop was “at the Luzhsky training range, Leningrad Region.”[35] On September 18th, the Russian MoD reported that “motorized rifle units” of the Baltic Fleet supported by artillery, engineers, and air defense troops “drilled blocking and eliminating of a maneuver[ing] illegal armed formation.”[36] They did not provide numbers.

The Russian MoD also said, “...Su-24M bombers delivered a mass bombing on the facilities of the maneuver enemy at a training range in the Leningrad Region.”[37] There were live and simulated launches of nuclear-capable Iskander-M missiles, Tochka-U missiles (SS-21) and an Iskander-based R-500 cruise missiles as part of the exercise including near St. Petersburg.[38] (Because of its limited range, the use of the SS-21 suggests attacks on the Baltic republics.)

One of the most ominous statements by the Russian MoD was that “NBC [Nuclear Biological Chemical] units carried out decontamination of weapons and hardware in the special area.”[39] If simulated WMD was used, it could have only been used by the Russians because the NATO states in the region do not have any.[40] There was other reported NBC activity during Zapad 2017.

There were a number of other Russian exercises during Zapad 2017, which, according to Roger McDermott, “...were no doubt built into the exercise in order to offer the General Staff greater insight into Russia’s defense capabilities.”[41] Pavel Felgenhauer wrote, “On the last day of the war game, intense military activity was spread out to include the Barents Sea in the north and the Black Sea in the south, apparently mimicking an escalation of a conflict in the Baltic region into a major clash between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).”[42] The evidence is particularly strong regarding the Northern Fleet involvement in Zapad 2017.

On the first day of Zapad 2017, Russia announced the start of a major Northern Fleet exercises concurrently with Zapad 2017. In August 2017, the Northern Fleet press office announced their participation in Zapad 2017, telling the press that they were staging an exercise in August “as a preparatory phase to the large-scale joint Russian-Belarus drills «Zapad-2017» scheduled for the period 14-20 September.”[43] Dividing Zapad 2017 into multiple exercises reduced its apparent size and scope and eliminated the need to tell Belarus about its most sensitive details. Announced Russian activity during Zapad 2017 reportedly went beyond the agreement with Belarus. According to a Belarusian opposition website *Belorusskiy Partizan*, “...the Russian side prepared a whole set of maneuvers and training in Zapad 2017 which were not planned from the start. This included full distance Iskander missile launches, tough maneuvers of two brigades and one division and each brigade had a minimum of 3,000 servicemen, and the division - 10,000.”[44] This alone exceeds the announced troop numbers.

On September 14, 2017, the Northern Fleet announced, “An all-arms strike group has been deployed to the Barents Sea as part of the exercise of the Northern Fleet’s united strategic command.”[45] The supposed 5,000 troops involved, while as large as the complete supposed Russian involvement in Zapad 2017, clearly only counts sailors at sea, not the base personnel that supports them or their defenses, aircraft personnel and ground forces. On September 21, the Russian MoD announced that the “Northern Fleet warship battle group...supported by fighters repelled a massive air attack” which included attacks by six cruise missiles.[46] It also said there

was a fight between the Russian nuclear-powered missile cruiser and a nuclear submarine.^[47] The Russian cruiser also “launched anti-ship missiles at an amphibious landing group in the Barents Sea.”^[48] (The only NATO states with nuclear-powered submarines are the U.S., the U.K. and France.) When the exercise (supposedly) ended on September 22, the North Sea fleet press office said it involved, “Thirteen launches of seaborne and surface winged missiles” and noted the participation of the “Dmitry Donskoy heavy strategic ballistic missile submarine...”^[49] The cruise missile launches included the longer-range land-based Bastion.^[50] It also noted the participation of “two nuclear underwater missile cruisers.”^[51] This is an unusual formulation, although *TASS* had previously characterized the Borey class strategic nuclear ballistic missile submarines as “underwater missile cruisers.”^[52]

The phrase “all-arms strike group” in the Russian press statement is apparently an allusion to its nuclear strike capability which is quite considerable. According to the Defense Intelligence Agency, “The Northern Fleet is Russia’s most capable naval force...[I]ts seven operational ballistic missile submarines provide the bulk of the firepower for the Navy’s arm of the strategic nuclear triad....The Northern Fleet’s two primary missions are to provide strategic deterrence with its ballistic missile submarines and to defend the maritime approaches to northwest Russia.”^[53] The involvement of large numbers of Northern Fleet units implies a major war against the U.S. and NATO which could have been precipitated by a Russian invasion of several NATO states. Another apparent reference to its nuclear strike role is that North Sea Fleet statement said, “In the near future, the Northern Fleet’s all-arms forces will work out cooperation, check readiness of crews for emergency actions and start direct preparation for military exercises with weapon employment.”^[54]

As in the case of Baltic fighting, the Northern Fleet exercise began with a small-scale attack on the fleet by fighter aircraft and cruise missiles, which was defeated.^[55] Again, the purpose of the attack was to establish the legitimacy of a major war against NATO. This had to involve the NATO alliance as a whole rather than a few Baltic NATO states that could not possibly have launched an attack on the Northern Fleet. Northern Fleet ship “artillery helped support seashore defense and repel [an] ‘enemy’ amphibious assault.”^[56] The Northern Fleet “deployed several battalions from its motor rifle brigades for live fire exercises, defending against land and air attacks.”^[57] Again, this is a type of attack that can only be launched by the U.S. (after considerable preparation and force deployment) with any hope of success.

There are other announced Russian exercises during Zapad 2017 that were briefed to reporters as part of the exercise. Zapad 2017 was apparently a global war with the U.S. and its allies. On the opening day of Zapad, Russia staged a night exercise involving their Su-34 long-range strike fighter in the Eastern Military District.^[58] The MoD told the press that Su-35s from Khabarovsk “destroyed an enemy field camp and supplies.”^[59] There was also an air defense exercise in the Eastern Military District.^[60] The Eastern Military District’s ground forces staged an exercise involving, “About 3000 troops and 500 pieces of equipment [which] are deploying [for] various drills on Sakhalin.”^[61] (This is just north of Japan) The Pacific Fleet, according to Center for Naval Analysis analyst Michael Kofman, ran an exercise in which, “A project 971 Akula SSN (Kuzbass) and project 667BDR Delta III SSBN (Ryazan) ran a mock torpedo duel.”^[62]

Kofman noted that in the Central Military District there was an exercise in which Russian troops restored communications by “construct[ing] four bridges with a total length of 1,000m and to lay about 10 km of rail track” in response to “a mock enemy” attack which “destroyed with high-precision weapons a railway bridge across the Yenisei River...”[63] There was also a Central Military District S-300 air defense exercise which involved a 4,000-km relocation of the force.[64] In the Central Military District 500 Special Forces troops were involved in an exercise.[65] Also, Caspian Flotilla Marines were involved in the interdiction of enemy marine forces landing from the Caspian.[66] They also “held the line against enemy forces on the coast of Dagestan in time for airborne reinforcements.”[67] Additionally, there was a chemical weapons exercise in the Central Military District.[68]

On the last day of the Zapad 2017 exercise, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that, “On September 20, the Yars intercontinental multiple-warhead ballistic missile was launched from Plesetsk by the missile formation of Yoshkar-Ola.”[69] The Yars is only armed with nuclear warheads. According to Russian expatriate expert Pavel Podvig, the Yars launch “appears to be linked to the large Zapad-2017 exercise that was completed today.”[70] This launch was only eight days after the previous Yars launch. Such close timing has literally never happened before which makes it probable that this is the standard Russian nuclear escalation that ends the Zapad exercises.

It is also possible that a number of Strategic Missile Forces exercises conducted just before Zapad 2017 were out of sequence parts of Zapad 2017. On September 7th, Strategic Missile Troops Colonel General Sergei Karakayev headed an ICBM force “combat alert” command training exercise which involved “about 2,000 servicemen and 150 command posts of operational and strategic branches...”[71] On September 4th there was an eleven regiment Russian mobile ICBM force field exercise.[72] On August 30th, the Russian MoD said, “Russia’s Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) have started drills to practice handling chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats in 20 regions of the country...”[73] Five days after the supposed end of Zapad 2017, Russia staged a multi-regiment ICBM force exercise involving 600 vehicles and all types of Russia’s mobile ICBMs. The Russian MoD indicated, “It is planned to train passing through a mock contaminated terrain. At the end of the exercise, the troops are to drill simulated launching of missiles.”[74] Four days later there was another mobile ICBM exercise involving 20 launchers, 400 vehicles, and 4,000 troops.[75] This is an unusual number of major Strategic Missile Force exercises in a month and, hence, hints at a linkage to Zapad 2017.

Unlike the earlier Zapad exercises, there was no indication that Russia was in a desperate situation when they initiated simulated nuclear strikes. Indeed, they had won. While the “terrorists” were very well armed – probably better armed than the four “robust” NATO battalions – they were very few in number. However, if this was a simulated invasion of NATO territory, there was the possibility of a major NATO counterattack. The ICBM launch appears to be a nuclear warning shot designed to prevent a serious NATO counterattack. As Pavel Felgenhauer observed, “A ground-mobile RC-24 Yars intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) was test-fired from the Plesetsk firing range, on September 20 (Militarynews.ru, September 20).” Moreover, two supersonic Tu-22M3 Backfire jet bombers overflew the Baltic and Norwegian Seas (Militarynews.ru, September 21). These deployments would seem to indicate an escalation of the conflict with ‘Western forces,’ as described in the Zapad 2017 scenario, going nuclear, but

possibly in a limited fashion, to scare the West into submission and retreat—a potential deterrent tactic long embedded in Russian military thinking, though never announced publicly.”[76] An even more likely Russian simulated first use of nuclear weapons on the same day was the announced launch of two AS-15 long-range nuclear ALCMs from Tu-95 heavy bombers, allegedly as target missiles.[77] (Russian simulated use of nuclear weapons in Zapad 1999, according to Jacob W. Kipp, by launching cruise missiles from Tu-95 and Tu-160 bombers “against countries from whose territories the offensive was launched.”[78]) This is about the only thing Russia could have said about the launches that would not have revealed simulated nuclear weapons use, something they did not want to do. Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council Secretary Oleksandr Turchynov said that during Zapad 2017 a Russian missile submarine carried out a simulated nuclear SLBM launch and “six long-range Tu-95MC and Tu-22M3” bombers carried out simulated nuclear strikes.[79] This appears to be credible.

Zapad 2017 is another warning that Russia is preparing for a major war against NATO involving nuclear escalation. The need to enhance our deterrent capability is critical. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Obama administration recognized the nuclear threat from Russia but did little to counter it. Hopefully, the 2017 Nuclear Posture Review will do better.

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Notes:

[1] [Simon Saradzhyan](https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1938377719?accountid=155509), “100,000 troops will engage in Russia’s Zapad-2017 war games: But don’t think the Kremlin is looking for another war,” *The Washington Post*, September 13, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1938377719?accountid=155509>.

[2] “Putin visits Zapad-2017 to see military eliminate simulated terrorist infiltrators,” *TASS*, September 18, 2017, available at <http://tass.com/defense/966181>.

[3] “Ukraine says Belarus, Russia underreport Zapad drill figures,” *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, September 19, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1940240959?>.

[4] “U.S. Army Europe: Russia War Games Broke Observer Rules,” *Associated Press*, October 3, 2017, available at

https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/10/03/us_army_europe_russia_war_games_broke_observer_rules_112425.html.: Tom Parfitt, “Russian war games put ‘70,000 troops’ on West's doorstep,” London, *The Times*, September 15, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/docview/1938999976?Accountid=155509>.
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[5] “Suspensions regarding Zapad 2017 military exercise were justified – NATO,” *Baltic News Service, Latvian Daily News*, September 22, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1941249321?accountid=155509>.

[6] Eric Schmitt, “Vast Exercise Demonstrated Russia’s Growing Military Prowess,” *The New York Times*, October 1, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/01/us/politics/zapad-russia-military-exercise.html>.

[7] “Zapad involved several times more troops than official numbers - Lithuanian officials,” *Baltic News Service, Lithuanian Daily News*, September 26, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1942602818?accountid=155509>.

[8] Vladimir Sokirko, “Top-ol, Top-ol!!” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, December 23, 1999.

[9] Simon Saradzhyan, *Russia’s Non-strategic Nuclear Weapons in Their Current Configuration and Posture: A Strategic Asset or Liability?*, (Harvard Belfer Center, January 2010), p. 18, available at <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/russian-position-NSNWs.pdf>.

[10] Dr. Jacob W. Kipp, “Russia’s Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons,” *Military Review*, May-June 2001, available at http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/russias_nukes/russias_nukes.htm.

[11] “Western MD air defence forces repelled simulated air attack at the Zapad 2017,” Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, September 14, 2017, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142263@egNews.

[12] “Putin visits Zapad-2017 to see military eliminate simulated terrorist infiltrators,” op, cit.

[13] “Zapad-2017: Western MD tank crews eliminated mock terrorists,” Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, September 18, 2017, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142716@egNews.

[14] “Zapad 2017 joined strategic exercise,” Defense Ministry Russian Federation, August 29, 2017, available at <http://eng.mil.ru/en/mission/practice/more.htm?id=12140115@egNews>.

[15] “Russian planes attack simulated enemy forces at Zapad-2017 exercise,” *TASS*, September 18, 2017, available at <http://tass.com/defense/966192>.

[16] Ibid.

[17] [Roger McDermott](#), “Zapad 2017 and the Initial Period of War,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 14 Issue: 115, September 20, 2017, available at <https://jamestown.org/program/zapad-2017-and-the-initial-period-of-war/>.

[18] Jerome Cartillier and Jo Biddle, “US calls on Moscow to get rid of banned arms,” *AFP*, July 29, 2014, available at [http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Sticking_An_Iskander_Missile_Into_The_ABM_Shield_Part_One_999.html](http://news.yahoo.com/russia-violated-arms-treaty-testing-cruise-missile-us-002749693.html;_ylt=A0LEVj1Ex3VVO9YAtmwnnIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTEzZWJidTA2BGNvbG8DYmYxBHBvcwMxBHZ0aWQDRkZHRtAXzEEc2VjA3Ny#:Ilya Kramnik, “Sticking An Iskander Missile Into The ABM Shield Part One,” <i>UPI</i>, November 19, 2008, available at <a href=).; Mikhail Barabanov, “The Iskander Factor,” *Kommersant*, November 9, 2008, available at http://www.kommersant.com/p1052937/r_527/Iskander_missiles_to_counterbalance_American_AMD_systems/.

[19] “Zapad-2017 exercise puts Russian army’s ‘nervous system’ to test,” *TASS*, September 19, 2017, available at <http://tass.com/defense/966366>.

[20] “Crews of three Baltic fleet corvettes deliver artillery strike on sea, coastal targets during Zapad exercise,” *Interfax*, September 17, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1939695484?accountid=155509>.

[21] “Commander of the Baltic Fleet estimated the missile firing in the framework of the exercise Zapad 2017 as ‘excellent’,” Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, September 19, 2017, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142880@egNews.

[22] “Missile units of the Baltic Fleet eliminated simulated ship detachment in course of the Zapad 2017 exercise,” Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, September 19, 2017, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142868@egNews.

[23] [McDermott](#), “Zapad 2017 and the Initial Period of War,” op. cit.

[24] “MiG-31BM intercepted cruise missiles at Zapad 2017,” The Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, September 19, 2017, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142822.

[25] “Su-25 attack planes eliminated mock enemy convoy at Zapad 2017,” Defense Ministry Russian Federation, September 18, 2017, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142633@egNews.

[26] “Russian Aerospace Forces air defense units protect Moscow against mock enemy air strike in Zapad 2017 exercise,” *Interfax*, September 15, 2017, available at <https://dialog.proquest.com/professional/professional/docview/1939239178?accountid=155509>.

[27] “Russian & Belarusian Military Police foiled attack on command post at Zapad 2017,” Defense Ministry Russian Federation, September 18, 2018, available at http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142731 @egNews.

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