



open briefing
the civil society intelligence agency



Strategic Order of Battle: Russian Airborne Forces

by Rob O’Gorman CD

Russia’s elite airborne force is the *Vozdushno-Desantnye Voyska (VDV)*. It can be considered a strategic force, on a par with their rocket and space forces.

With its origins in the 1930s, Russia’s airborne force is currently the largest and most highly-mechanised in the world. Having fought with distinction during World War II, against the mujahideen in Afghanistan and in the Five-Day War with Georgia, the presence of Russian airborne troops in Crimea and eastern Ukraine only confirms their status as an elite force within the Russian military. Recent improvements in training and equipment have made the VDV an even more formidable force, one that should not be underestimated.

This publication provides an in-depth look at the ongoing transformation of Russia’s airborne forces, together with a strategic order of battle that details personnel and equipment levels for each of Russia’s four airborne divisions, four independent air assault brigades, Spetsnaz regiment, headquarters units and training division. As such, it represents the most detailed open source intelligence on Russia’s airborne forces available today.

About the author: Rob O’Gorman is a senior analyst at Open Briefing and a Russian military expert. A former Canadian Forces intelligence officer, he has over 20 years’ experience providing tactical, operational and strategic assessments. O’Gorman also served as a paratrooper with A (Para) Company, 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry.

Published 24 October 2014 by Open Briefing. To order visit:

<http://www.openbriefing.org/thinktank/publications/russian-airborne-forces>