

# Defence Ministry Board meeting

Vladimir Putin took part in the Defence Ministry Board meeting held at the National Defence Control Centre.

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The participants summed up the Armed Forces' performance in 2019. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief outlined the principal objectives in terms of military development and in key areas of the Ministry's activity next year.

The annual expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board was attended by members of the Security Council, senior members of the Federal Assembly and the Government, as well as commanders of military districts, formations and units of the Armed Forces.

After the meeting, Vladimir Putin awarded state decorations to the Northern Fleet, the Long-Range Aviation Command and the 104<sup>th</sup> Guards Air Assault Regiment. For strengthening the country's defence capability, high performance in combat training, courage and dedication displayed by the personnel during the implementation of combat training and special tasks the Red Banner Northern Fleet was awarded the Order of Ushakov; the Long-Range Aviation Command – the Order of Suvorov; the 104<sup>th</sup> Red Banner Guards Air Assault Regiment – the Order of Kutuzov.

During his visit to the National Defence Control Centre, the President also met with the commanders of the military districts and the Northern Fleet.

Before the meeting, the President visited an exhibition of advanced weapons and equipment. In particular, the President was shown the mortar (artillery) battery automation facilities set, the Adjutant complex, the Epokha unmanned combat module, the Harpoon-2M portable anti-drone system, a Russian-made buggy, the Phoenix UAV, the Piranha inflatable airboat and the latest Topaz, Taktika and Kalan armoured vests.

Vladimir Putin was also shown finds from the joint expedition of the Northern Fleet and the Russian Geographical Society carried out in August-September 2019 on Franz Josef Land. During the expedition, five new geographic locations were discovered and the maximum depth of the Barents Sea was specified at 634 metres. An explorers' dog-sledge, one of the main finds, will be given to the Russian Arctic National Park in Arkhangelsk.

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## **Speech at the expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board**

**President of Russia Vladimir Putin:** Good afternoon, comrade officers,

Over the past few years, we have held the expanded meetings of the Defence Ministry Board and other events in the field of military development at the National Defence Control Centre. It opened on December 19 five years ago. Since then, it has become an effective instrument of army and navy command and a vital part of interagency cooperation.

I would like to thank everyone serving or working at the centre and those who created it, and to wish you every success in protecting Russia's military security.

We have met for this expanded meeting to review the performance of the Armed Forces in 2019 and to discuss their principal objectives in the future.

It should be said that many quality and system-wide changes took place in the Armed Forces in 2019. The share of modern weapons in the nuclear triad has reached 82 percent. The latest ballistic missiles with the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) are being delivered to the Strategic Missile Forces. This weapon of the future can penetrate both the existing and any future missile defence systems.

Important steps have been taken to improve control, communications, intelligence and electronic warfare systems. The progress is mainly due to the introduction of the most recent technologies in the collection, transmission and processing of information.

If you remember last year, we talked about the need to reduce decision-making time

at all levels of the Armed Forces. We have achieved a result. Thanks to the use of advanced technologies, integrated solutions and new algorithms, it was possible to improve the performance and increase the capabilities of the Armed Forces command and control system.

The previous models of weapons and equipment used in the Aerospace Forces, Navy, and in other branches and services are being systematically replaced by modern ones, including those based on digital technology and artificial intelligence. Robotic systems and unmanned aerial vehicles are being rigorously introduced and used in combat training, which dramatically boosts the capabilities of armed units and subunits.

The troops regularly use the new equipment to practice performing tactically difficult, non-standard tasks during their exercises, manoeuvres, and snap combat readiness inspections. The nuclear forces have confidently showed their increased capabilities at the Grom [Thunder] 2019 exercise. The Navy as well as long-range aviation fully accomplished their tasks during the Ocean Shield drills; for the first time, Russian military units tested and coordinated actions among eight states to perform antiterrorist operations during the Center-2019 manoeuvres.

The Russian army continues to play a key role in achieving peace in Syria. The Aerospace Forces group, ships and submarines of the Navy, including those deployed at the Khmeimim airbase and the naval base in Tartus, are guarantors of peace and stability in that country.

It is also important that Russia, thanks to the qualitatively increased capabilities of the Armed Forces, is confidently entering a new level of international military cooperation. Several Tu-160 flights over the western part of the Indian Ocean were performed from airfields in South Africa. Russian crews joined forces with their Chinese counterparts on combat patrolling of the airspace over the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan, also for the first time.

Efforts to develop military education and pre-university training were also among the notable outcomes of this year. Two new state-of-the-art education institutions opened: the Kemerovo Presidential Cadet School and a branch of the Defence Ministry Girls' Boarding School in St Petersburg.

I can add that all military academy graduates in 2019, over 14,000 officers in total, received positions in the military confirming to their profession. This means that

the overall military education system in its current form satisfies the current and future needs of the Armed Forces, operates in a balanced and sound manner, training new generations of military professionals who will build the future of Russia's Army and Navy.

Colleagues,

A general review of the Armed Forces shows that it demonstrates high operational efficiency. All services and branches within the Armed Forces can deliver on their objectives, guaranteeing peace and security for Russia. This is a matter of principle and has critical importance in today's international environment and considering the related risks.

Tension persists in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and on the Korean Peninsula. NATO is expanding its military infrastructure close to our borders.

The arms control regime is disintegrating, which causes serious concern. This is not limited to the dismantling of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) by the United States under a pretext that is clearly far-fetched and absolutely groundless.

Since November 2019, Washington has been creating uncertainty regarding its engagement under the Treaty on Open Skies. The prospects of extending the New START are equally vague. And all this is taking place while the United States is expanding the capability of its global missile defence system. We see this, and we are aware of these developments.

In this context we must continue to strengthen and develop the Army and Navy, as well as to focus on the following key objectives in 2020.

First of all, the share of modern weapons and equipment in the Army and Navy must reach at least 70 percent by the end of 2020. This goal has been already achieved in some arms and services, but others must continue working, for example, the Ground Forces.

This goal – 70 percent of modern equipment – must be attained and subsequently maintained. As I mentioned, our goal is not a one-time rearmament, after which we can

forget about the Army and Navy for decades. The Army and Navy must always have the best equipment and technology. Just now I visited an exhibition, where some people reported proudly that some of our equipment and technology are up to world standards. But in fact, as I have told our defence representatives more than once, it must be even better; our equipment must be better than the world's best if we want to come out as the winners. This is not a game of chess where we can sometimes accept a tie. It concerns the military organisation of the nation. Our equipment must be better. We can do it and we are doing it in the key spheres. But we must also do it in all spheres.

Second, the drafting of the national defence plan for 2021–2025 will be completed next year. While working on it, we must take into account the military and political changes that have happened in the world and try to forecast future developments, as well as to comprehensively analyse potential military threats and formulate measures for the use and improvement of the Armed Forces.

Third, I have said that this year the United States has actually destroyed the INF Treaty, which is why we must monitor the potential deployment of US missiles of this class around the world, but first of all in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

We are ready to work out new arms control agreements. But until this process is launched we will continue to strengthen our nuclear forces. I am referring to the delivery of cutting-edge Avangard and Yars systems to the Strategic Missile Forces and Borei-A missile submarines to the naval nuclear forces.

And lastly, we will continue to create other promising missile systems that can ensure guaranteed deterrence of aggression against Russia and its allies.

Fourth, operational and combat training should serve to develop innovative and more effective ways of using troops, units and subunits, and positive results should be immediately incorporated into combat training programmes.

During the upcoming Caucasus 2020 exercise, special attention should be paid to the training of command post staff to lead coalition forces and troops, and drill military personnel in acting in difficult geographical and climatic conditions.

Comrades,

One of our key and traditional priorities is to improve the social security system for military service members. The federal budget provides for their service pay to be indexed annually over the next three years: by 3 percent in 2020, and by 4 percent each in 2021 and 2022. Pensions of retired servicemen will also increase.

It is planned to continue issuing housing subsidies, requested by more than 70 percent of servicemen who are in need of housing. More than 218 billion rubles have been allocated for these purposes since 2014. In the next three years, another 113 billion will be provided. The development of a funded mortgage system will also continue.

It is important to continue to develop, in a balanced manner, all the components of the social security system for military personnel, as the effectiveness of your work – our common work on the Armed Forces development – will directly depend on this.

Colleagues,

Ensuring Russia's defence capability is a crucial task and a priority among other matters of state and national importance. No matter how events develop, reliable and guaranteed defence of our Fatherland from any potential military threats must remain a given.

We do not forget the lessons of history; we are proud of our heroes and remember our fallen fighters. In the coming year, 2020, we will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Victory in the Great Patriotic War with grand celebrations on a national scale. This day is sacred for all citizens of Russia – a symbol of courage and heroism of our Army, Navy, and all Russian people.

I know that the Armed Forces' main cathedral, the Church of the Resurrection in Kubinka, is going to be completed in the Moscow Region in time for the occasion – I just got updated on the project. The Victory Parade on Red Square and a number of other grandiose events are being prepared. I am sure that all of them will be held at a high level, and the Armed Forces will celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Victory by showing even higher performance results in ensuring the nation's defence capability and security.

I would like to thank you, colleagues, all the personnel of the Armed Forces, for the impeccable fulfilment of your tasks, and for your loyalty to Russia. I wish you

success in your service.

Thank you.

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**Vladimir Putin:** Colleagues,

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about issues not directly related to the topics we discuss today but concerning them in one way or another.

Let me begin with a story. You may have noticed that recently I met with my colleagues, the CIS heads of state – the heads of the countries that not so long ago were part of our common motherland, our common state, which faced Nazi Germany in World War II and won the Great Patriotic War.

I said there (and we have noted this many times) that some countries – our neighbours in Europe and on the other side of the ocean – often try to distort history and make up unbelievable scenarios of how the situation in the world and Europe developed on the eve of World War II. And recently, as a logical conclusion to this process, the European Parliament adopted a resolution that almost puts Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on the same level, implying or even saying directly that the Soviet Union was also responsible for the beginning of World War II. Of course, this is complete nonsense.

I asked my colleagues to search for some materials in the archives and I looked them through. I presented an incomplete list of those documents to my colleagues who are present here today, and to the CIS heads of state. I mentioned this in passing at that meeting, we had no time really, and even now there's no occasion yet to talk about it in detail. Nevertheless, I will still talk a bit about it, and later, as you might have noticed, I will write an article on this, just as I promised.

The USSR was the last country in Europe to sign the Treaty of Non-aggression with Germany. The last. All the other leading European countries did this before the Soviet Union. Yes, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (let me remind you that Ribbentrop was Germany's foreign minister, and Molotov was the foreign minister and chairman of the Council of Ministers) was signed, and there was also a secret protocol which

defined the spheres of influence. But what have the European countries been doing before that? The same. They had all done the same thing, starting in 1938, when Hitler claimed part of Czechoslovakia, and Great Britain and France turned their backs on their ally, although France had a treaty of mutual assistance with Czechoslovakia. Thus Hitler got a chance to seize part of the country.

But what did the other countries do, Poland, for example? They actually conspired with Hitler. This much is directly evident from the documents – from archive documents. Another question is whether there were any secret annexes or not – but it doesn't matter. It is important how they acted. They acted in collusion for certain – just from the documents on how they negotiated. And at the so-called Munich Conference, Hitler directly represented the interests of Poland, and partly of Hungary. He directly represented their interests, and then he said to the Poles: It was so difficult to defend your interests, you know. We have it all in the documents. Thank God, we have enough archival documents that we attained as trophies from the European countries after World War II.

But that's not all. What really hit me hard, I'm telling you honestly, was how Hitler and the official representatives of Poland discussed the so-called Jewish problem. Hitler told the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and later bluntly said to the Polish Ambassador to Germany that he had a plan to send the Jewish population to Africa, to the colonies. Imagine, in 1938, to expel Jews from Europe to Africa. Sending them to their extermination. To destruction. And here is what the Polish ambassador wrote to the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr Beck: When I heard this, he wrote, I responded (to Hitler, he means), that if this happens and this issue is resolved, we will build a beautiful monument to him (to Hitler) in Warsaw. That bastard! That anti-Semitic pig – I have no other words. He was in complete solidarity with Hitler in his anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic sentiment and, moreover, he proposed erecting a monument to Hitler in Warsaw for persecuting the Jewish people. And he wrote to his patron, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, apparently hoping for understanding and approval. He would not have written this without a reason.

I won't go into more detail now, but in any case, I want to emphasise again: we have enough materials to prevent anyone from corrupting the memory of our fathers, our grandfathers, and all those who gave their lives for the victory over Nazism.

I just want to note that this kind of people, people like the ones who were negotiating with Hitler back then, they now deface monuments to the liberator soldiers, Red Army



soldiers who liberated the countries of Europe and the European peoples from Nazism. These are their followers. In this sense, unfortunately, little has changed. And we must keep this in mind, also with regard to the development of our Armed Forces.

Here is what I would like to say in this regard, which I think is critically important. Please note: neither the Soviet Union, nor Russia have ever tried to create a threat to other countries. We were always catching up in this regard. The United States created the atomic bomb, and the Soviet Union caught up with it. We did not have nuclear weapon delivery vehicles or carriers. There was no such thing as strategic aviation, and the Soviet Union was catching up in this area, as well. The first intercontinental missiles actually were not built here, and the Soviet Union was trying to catch up.

Today, we have a unique situation in our new and recent history. They try to catch up with us. Not a single country possesses hypersonic weapons, let alone continental-range hypersonic weapons. We already have Kinzhal (Dagger) hypersonic missile systems in the field, and Peresvet laser combat systems have already been deployed with the troops as well.

The Minister just told us that we have begun to equip the first regiment of the Strategic Missile Forces with the latest Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle. Work on other systems is underway, including Sarmat boosted intercontinental ballistic missile; Zircon ground- and sea-based hypersonic rockets; the Poseidon UUV; and the Burevestnik nuclear-armed cruise missile.

Other systems have been fielded as well, including the ones that were tested during various exercises and in combat conditions in Syria, such as Kalibr cruise missiles.

There are also other technologies. They are not covered much in the media, but they do exist, are sent to the army and are operational.

In this regard, I would like to say that even though we spend much less than other countries (we rank 7<sup>th</sup> at this point, the Minister said, and could even slide to the 9<sup>th</sup>), this does not mean that we are ready to compromise our combat readiness. No. All we are doing we are doing according to a plan.

At one of the board meetings I deliberately said, and maybe someone in the audience remembers it; I would like to repeat what I said back then. I didn't say it accidentally.

I said it because it represents our competitive advantage and it is about our ability to maintain the defence capability we need. What exactly will help us move forward? I said then literally the following: brains, intelligence, better organisation of work, minimising theft and negligence, and concentrating efforts on key areas will lead us to a high state of defence capability.

Please build your work in this way in the new year. Happy New Year! I wish you every success. Thank you.

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