Strategic Missile Troops

The **Strategic Missile Troops** or **Strategic Rocket Forces** of the Russian Federation or **RVSN RF**[2] are a military branch of the Russian Armed Forces that controls Russia's land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The RVSN was first formed in the Soviet Armed Forces, and when the USSR collapsed in December 1991, it effectively changed its name from the Soviet to the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces or Strategic Missile Troops.

The Strategic Rocket Forces were created on December 17, 1959 as the main force used for attacking an enemy's offensive nuclear weapons, military facilities, and industrial infrastructure.[3] They operated all Soviet nuclear ground-based intercontinental, intermediate-range ballistic missile, and medium-range ballistic missile with ranges over 1,000 kilometers. Complementary strategic forces within Russia are the Long Range Aviation and the Russian Navy's ballistic missile submarines

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History

The first Soviet rocket study unit was established in June 1946, by redesignating the 92nd Guards Mortar Regiment at Bad Berka in East Germany as the 22nd Brigade for Special Use of the Reserve of the Supreme High Command.[4] On October 18, 1947 the brigade conducted the first launch of the remanufactured former German A-4 ballistic missile, or R-1, from the Kapustin Yar Range.[5] In the early 1950s the 77th and 90th Brigades were also formed to operate the R-1 (SS-1a 'Scunner'). The 54th and 56th Brigades were formed to conduct test launches of the R-2 (SS-2 'Sibling') at Kapustin Yar on June 1, 1952.

Strategic Missile Troops	
Ракетные войска стратегического назначения *Raketnye voyska strategicheskogo naznacheniya*	
 SRF emblem and flag	
Active	December 17, 1959 – present
Branch	Russian Armed Forces
Type	Strategic missile force
Role	Strategic Missile Deterrence
Size	~60,000 personnel (2017)[1]
Headquarters	Vlasikha, 2.5 km northwest of Odintsovo, Moscow Oblast
Motto(s)	"*После нас - тишина*" ("After us - silence")
Anniversaries	17 December
Equipment	Ballistic missiles, cruise missiles
Engagements	Cuban Missile Crisis
Commanders	
Current commander	Colonel General Sergei Karakayev
Insignia	
Flag	
Great Emblem	

From 1959 the Soviets introduced a number of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) into service, including the R-12 (SS-4 'Sandal'), the R-7 (SS-6 'Sapwood'), the R-16 (SS-7 'Saddler'), the R-9 (SS-8 'Sasin'), the R-26 (given the NATO reporting name SS-8 'Sasin' due to incorrect identification as the R-9), the R-36 (SS-9 'Scarp'), and the RT-21 (SS-16 'Sinner'), which was possibly never made fully operational. By 1990 all these early types of missiles had been retired from service. This was the very year that the Strategic Missile Troops were officially established as a service branch of the Armed Forces under the direct control of the Defense Ministry. The date of its formal foundation, December 17, is celebrated as Strategic Missile Troops Day.

Two rocket armies were formed in 1960. The 43rd Rocket Army and the 50th Rocket Army were formed from the previous 43rd and 50th Air Armies of the Long Range Aviation.

During a test of the R-16 ICBM on October 24, 1960, the test missile exploded on the pad, killing the first commander of the SRF, Chief Marshal of Artillery Mitrofan Ivanovich Nedelin. This disaster, the details of which were concealed for decades, became known as the Nedelin catastrophe. He was succeeded by Marshal of the Soviet Union Kirill Moskalenko, who in turn was succeeded quickly by Marshal Sergey Biryuzov.[6] Under Marshal Biryuzov the SRF deployed missiles to Cuba in 1962 as part of Operation Anadyr. 36 R-12 intermediate range ballistic missiles were sent to Cuba, initiating the Cuban Missile Crisis. The 43rd Guards Missile Division of 43rd Rocket Army manned the missiles while in Cuba.[7]

Marshal Nikolai Krylov then took over in March 1963 and served until February 1972. During this time French President Charles de Gaulle visited the Strategic Rocket Forces in 1966. Together with NI Krylov, he visited a missile division in Novosibirsk, and then at the invitation of Leonid Brezhnev participated in a demonstration missile launch at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in the Kazakh SSR. Chief Marshal of Artillery Vladimir Fedorovich Tolubko commanded the SRF from April 12, 1972 to July 10, 1985. Tolubko emphasised raising the physical fitness standards within the SRF. He was succeeded by General of the Army Yury Pavlovich Maksimov, who commanded from July 10, 1985 to August 19, 1992.

According to a 1980 TIME Magazine article citing analysts from RAND Corporation, Soviet non-Slavs were generally barred from joining the Strategic Rocket Forces because of suspicions of loyalty of ethnic minorities to the Kremlin.[8]

In 1989 the Strategic Rocket Forces had over 1,400 ICBMs, 300 launch control centers, and twenty-eight missile bases.[9] The SMT also operated RSD-10 (SS-20 'Saber') intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and R-12 (SS-4 'Sandal') medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs). Two-thirds of the road-mobile Soviet RSD-10 force was based in the western Soviet Union and was aimed at Western Europe. One-third of the force was located east of the Ural Mountains and was targeted primarily against China. Older R-12 missiles were deployed at fixed sites in the western Soviet Union. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, signed in December 1987, called for the elimination of all 553 Soviet RSD-10 and R-12 missiles within three years. As of mid-1989, over 50% of RSD-10 and R-12 missiles had been eliminated.

U.S. DOD map of Soviet ICBM bases, 1980s

By 1990 the Soviet Union had seven types of operational ICBMs; about 50% were heavy R-36M (SS-18 'Satan') and UR-100N (SS-19 'Stilleto') ICBMs, which carried 80% of the country's land-based ICBM warheads. By this time it was also producing new mobile, and hence survivable ICBMs, the RT-23 (SS-24 'Scalpel') and RT-2PM (SS-25 'Sickle'). In 1990, with the R-12 apparently fully retired, the IISS reported that there were 350 UR-100s (SS-11 'Sego,' Mod 2/3), 60 RT-2s (SS-13 'Savage') still in service in one missile field, 75 UR-100MRs (SS-17 'Spanker,' Mod 3, with 4 MIRV), 308 R-36Ms (mostly Mod 4 with 10 MIRV), 320 UR-100Ns (mostly Mod 3 with 6 MIRV), some 60 RT-23s (silo and rail-mobile), and some 225 RT-2PMs (mobile).[10]

Composition of the Strategic Rocket Forces 1960–1991[11]

Formation	Headquarters Location	Year formed as Corps	Year formed as Army	Year disbanded[6]	Divisions
27th Guards Rocket Army	HQ Vladimir, Moscow Military District	01.09.59	1970	Still active	7th Guards Rocket Division, 28th Guards Rocket Division, (32 [12]), 54th Guards Rocket Division, 60th Rocket Division
31st Rocket Army	Orenburg, Urals Military District	05.09.65	1970	Still active	8th, 13th, 14th, (41st Guards), 42nd, 50, 52nd, (55), 59
33rd Guards Rocket Army	Omsk, Siberian Military District	1962	1970	Still active	23, (34), 35th, 36th Guards,38, 39th Guards, 57, 62
43rd Rocket Army[13]	Vinnitsa, Kiev Military District	–	1960	May 8, 1996	19 (Khmelnitsky), 37th Guards (Lutsk), 43 (Kremenchug), 44 (Kolomyia, Ivano-Frankovsk Oblast, disbanded March 31, 1990. Previously 73rd Engineer Brigade RVGK at Kamyshin.),[14] 46 (Pervomaisk, Mykolaiv Oblast)
50th Rocket Army	Smolensk, Belorussian Military District	–	1960	June 30, 1990	1988:[6] 7th Guards, 24th Guards (Gvardeysk, Kaliningrad Oblast),[15] 31st Guards (former 83rd Guards Bryansko-Berlinskaya Aviation (Missile) Division, renumbered July 1, 1960), 32nd (Postavy, Vitebsk Oblast), 40th, 49th Guards (Lida, Grodno Region, 1963 to 1990), 58th (Karmelava, Lithuania)
53rd Rocket Army[16]	Chita, Transbaikal Military District	1962	June 8, 1970	Sept. 16, 2002	1988:[6] 4th Missile Division (Drovyanaya, Chita Oblast),[17] 23rd Guards Missile Division (Kansk, assigned 1983–2002), 27th Rocket Division (Svobodnyy, Amur Oblast), 29th, 36th Guards, 47th Rocket Division (Olovyannaya, Chita Oblast)[18]

Like most of the Russian military, the Strategic Rocket Forces have had limited access to resources for new equipment in the Yeltsin era. However, the Russian government has made a priority of ensuring that the Rocket Forces receive new missiles to phase out older, less-reliable systems, and to incorporate newer capabilities in the face of international threats to the viability of the nuclear deterrent effect provided by their missiles, in particular the development of missile defense systems in the United States.

In 1995, the decree of the President of Russia № 1239 from December 10, 1995 "On establishing the Day of the Strategic Rocket Forces Day and Military Space Forces Day" was promulgated. On July 16, 1997, President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree incorporating the Russian Space Forces and the Space Missile Defence Forces (Russian: Ракетно-космической обороны) into the SMT.[19] In doing so, 'nearly 60' military units and establishments were dissolved. However, four years later, on June 1, 2001, the Russian Space Forces were reformed as a separate branch of service from the SMT.

Minister of Defence Marshal of the Russian Federation Igor Sergeev, a former commander of the SMT from August 19, 1992 – May 22, 1997, played a major role in assuring funding for his former service.[6] He was succeed by General of the Army Vladimir Yakovlev, who commanded the SMT from June 1997 until April 27, 2001. Yakovlev was succeeded by Colonel General Nikolay Solovtsov (ru:Соловцов, Николай Евгеньевич), appointed the same day. In early 2009 Solovtsov said that 96% of all Russian ICBMs are ready to be launched within a minute's notice.[20] Solovtsov was dismissed in turn in July–August 2009. Speculation over why Solovtsov was dismissed includes opposition to further cuts in deployed nuclear ballistic missile warheads below the April 2009 figure of 1,500, the fact that he had reached the retirement age of 60, despite that he had recently been extended another year's

service, or the failure of the Navy's Bulava missile).[21] After only a year, Lieutenant General Andrey Shvaichenko, appointed on August 3, 2009 by President Dmitry Medvedev, was replaced himself. The current commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel General Sergei Karakayev, was appointed to the post by a presidential decree of June 22, 2010.[22][23]

RVSN headquarters has a special sledgehammer that can be used to gain access to the launch codes if the commander feels the need to use these, but doesn't have normal access to the safe.[24]

Composition in 2010s

According to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, the RVSN main command post is at Kuntsevo in the suburbs of Moscow, with the alternate command post at Kosvinsky Mountain in the Urals.[25]

Female cadets have now started to join the Peter the Great Strategic Rocket Forces Academy.[26] RVSN institutes also exist at Serpukhov and Rostov-on-Don. An ICBM test impact range is located in the Far East, the Kura Test Range, although this has been part of the Aerospace Defence Forces since 2010.

The Strategic Rocket Forces operate four distinct missile systems. The oldest system is the silo-based R-36M2 / SS-18 *Satan* which carries ten warheads, the last missile will be in service until 2020. The second system is the silo-based UR-100NUTTH / SS-19 *Stiletto*, the last missiles in service with six warheads each will be removed by 2019. The single warhead mobile RT-2PM Topol / SS-25 *Sickle* are planned to be decommissioned by 2019.[27][28] A new missile entering service is the RT-2UTTH Topol-M / SS-27 *Sickle B* with single warhead, from which 60 are silo-based and 18 are mobile. Some new missiles will be added in future. First upgraded Topol-M called RS-24 Yars, carrying three warheads, was commissioned in 2010 and in July 2011 the first mobile regiment with 9 missiles was completed.[29] In 2012-2017, about 80 ICBMs were placed in active duty.[30][31]

The composition of missiles and warheads of the Strategic Rocket Forces previously had to be revealed as part of the START I treaty data exchange. The current (January 2017) order of battle of the forces is as follows:[32]

- 27th Guards Rocket Army (HQ: Vladimir)
  - 98th Separate Mixed Aviation Squadron
  - 7th Guards Rocket Division at Vypolzovo
  - 14th Rocket Division at Yoshkar-Ola with 6 mobile RS-24 Yars
  - 54th Guards Rocket Division at Teykovo with 18 mobile RT-2UTTH Topol-M and 18 (December 2011)[33] mobile RS-24
  - 28th Guards Rocket Division at Kozelsk with 12 silo-based RS-24
  - 60th Rocket Division at Tatischevo with 30 silo-based UR-100NUTTH and 60 silo-based RT-2UTTH Topol-M
- 31st Missile Army (HQ: Rostoshi)
  - 102nd Separate Mixed Aviation Squadron
  - 13th Red Banner Rocket Division at Dombarovskiy with 18 silo-based R-36M2 and presumed experimental variants of the UR-100NUTTH with final hypersonic velocity warheads (*Project 4202*).[34] The R-36s will be replaced with the new RS-28 Sarmat when operational.[35]
  - 42nd Rocket Division at Nizhniy Tagil with 27 mobile RS-24 Yars
- 33rd Guards Rocket Army (HQ: Omsk)
  - 105th Separate Mixed Aviation Squadron
  - 35th Rocket Division at Barnaul with 36 mobile RT-2PM Topol
  - 39th Guards Rocket Division at Novosibirsk with 27 mobile RS-24 Yars
  - 62nd Rocket Division at Uzhur with 28 silo-based R-36M2, which will also replaced with the new RS-28 Sarmat when operational.[35]

Numbers of missiles and warheads

The Strategic Rocket Forces have:[32]

- **46** silo-based R-36M2 (SS-18)

- **30** silo-based UR-100N (SS-19)
- **56** mobile RT-2PM "Topol" (SS-25)
- **60** silo-based RT-2UTTH "Topol M" (SS-27)
- **18** mobile RT-2UTTH "Topol M" (SS-27)
- **20** silo-based RS-24 "Yars" (SS-29)
- **90** mobile RS-24 "Yars" (SS-29)

Launch authorization device

Future

According to the Federation of American Scientists, for the foreseeable future, all new Russian ICBM deployments will be of MIRVed versions of the SS-27 "Topol-M", although a "new ICBM" and a "heavy ICBM" are also being developed. By the early 2020s, according to recent announcements by Russian military officials, all SS-18, SS-19, and SS-25 ICBMs will be gone. This development would leave a Russian ICBM force structure based on five modifications of the solid-fuel SS-27 (silo- and mobile-based SS-27 Mod 1 (Topol-M); silo- and mobile-based SS-27 Mod 2 (RS-24 Yars); and the RS-26 Rubezh) and the liquid-fuel RS-28 Sarmat with a large payload – either MIRV or some advanced payload to evade missile defense systems. Although the future force will be smaller, a greater portion of it will be MIRVed – up from approximately 36 percent in 2014 to roughly 70 percent by 2024.

See also

- Russian Aerospace Defence Forces
- Awards and emblems of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation
- List of states with nuclear weapons

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External links

- CSIS Missile Threat - Russia
- *Strategic Missile Troops museum* Official Website