



Russia: The Tree of Inefficiency

War and Peace

Ministerstvo Oborony: the Ministry of Defense

Red Army

Red Army Spetsnaz

VDV

RVSN

Red Navy

Naval Infantry

Red Navy Spetsnaz

GRU

DShB

GRU Spetsnaz

MVD: The Ministry of Internal Affairs

Militsia

OMON

Sector K

Vnutrennie Voiska

UGB: the Directorate of State Security

PV

Politruki

GAPSI

UGB Spetsnaz

Other Spetsnaz teams

Awakened Yakut: The wrath of Gaia

Sagan Zaba: The White Rock

Local combatants

Shono reached the edge of the forest and sniffed the air. Even the wind from the metahuman city lying before him stank; the smells of concrete, ozone and metahumans mixed with the swampy stench of melting permafrost. Shono snapped his jaws shut and exhaled forcefully; no stench was going to stop him from following the order from his father and pack leader. The young wolf shifter left the comforting darkness of the night forest, and barreled towards the light-flooded streets of Yakutsk.

As he ran deeper and deeper into the city through the roads paved with some kind of weird black stone, it continued to assault his senses. The stench he felt from the distance became overwhelming as he entered the city itself, and new components to it drifted in and out of the effective range of his nose as he ran along: tar from the weird paving, cooked vegetables and sometimes meat from metahuman homes, metahuman waste, and hundreds of weird synthetic smells all combined into a dizzying chaos; weird things of metal and synthetics larger than any bear roared down the roads past him; the night was as bright as day in this alien place. This seriously grated on Shono's nerves; unfortunately, there were no metahumans in sight to take it off on them.

After half an hour of walking in circles through the metahuman city, - every building looked the same as every other one, and everything smelled the same, - the wolf apparently finally reached his destination: a tree-tall wall stretched for minutes of running in any direction, the road broken by a guard post. The metahumans at guard smelled of burnt gunpowder and gun oil. Apparently this was the military base father was talking about.

Shono ran along the wall, sniffing the air, and watching out for any metahuman tech that could warn those inside of his presence. As he moved, the smell of spent ammunition warned him there was a firing range behind the wall; he hurried on, and the smell subsided. The wolf had to crouch and crawl past the wall's corner: another guard was peeking into the darkness from a watchtower, but Shono could not just get past him at a distance, wanting to maintain olfactory contact.

The smell of metahuman habitation greeted him around the corner – apparently, the people of the base lived just across the fence. Shono sniffed a few more times in disbelief: there definitely was a fellow shifter among them. Making a note of that for himself, the wolf proceeded along the wall, until the scent of metahumans was replaced by the stench of synthetic oils and steel. He shifted from one foot to another a few times, looking at the spirals of barbed wire atop the wall, and then seized it in a single graceful leap, landing silently onto all four paws among semicircular concrete buildings. Full of metal, and synthetics, and oils, by the smell of it. Now came the crucial and the hardest part of the plan.

First, he had to find a metahuman. Shono crawled under one of the steel contraptions and waited for his pray to come near, just as he did so many times before with his pack – except this time the pack was not around to help him. All the same, there was no way for him to fail, the young wolf told himself.

Not an hour later, as the East started to bloom pink, a tiredly shambling metahuman walked past the shifter's ambush, bringing the tang of aromatized tobacco with him – apparently a guard returning from duty. As the man passed his hiding place, Shono leapt after him, planting him face-first into the ground and knocking him unconscious with a single paw blow to the base of the skull. The wolf gripped the man's body with his jaws, and pulled him back under the

contraption he was hiding under, his assault rifle scraping against the ground as the wolf pulled him, and the boot leaving the taste of tanned leather and blacking in his mouth.

Shono shifted into his metahuman form behind the metahuman creation that gave him shelter, undressed the captured guard, and put on his uniform – just as his father said he should. It was a bit small against the shifter’s well-defined musculature, but that was the best he had, so there was nothing to be done about it.

Keeping a confident posture, the wolf marched across the base, easily avoiding the guards and passers-by thanks to smelling them long before they saw him. It did not take him long to find the headquarters; the base’s flagstaff with the Yakutian banner flying high was just before it, after all. Shono looked at the traces of wolf claws depicted on the flag, suppressed a slight desire to howl, and marched into the building.

The headquarters was silent and dark; at a semi-circular table just across the door in the barely noticeable glow of diodes on her equipment, a young uniformed metahuman female was waving her hands at something invisible to him. As he approached and dragged his pitiful human nails across the surface of the table to get her attention, she shuddered and looked up, tossing her hair to the side and baring her neck. Shono couldn’t help but snarl at that gesture and the sweet smell of fear emanating from her.

“What do you?..” – the girl started, but cut herself short as a massive figure stepped silently from the shadows behind the unknown man before her. The hand it placed on his shoulder seemed friendly, but its weight left no doubt as to who is in charge of the situation. “Aha, Shono of the White Moon Pack, then, son of Bagsha? Finally, my boy, we’ve been expecting you”, - a deep bass boomed, - “Your future mentor, Hyvne of the Smoke Mountain Pack, smelled you when you circled our base - you still smell of the forest even to me, - but good job infiltrating nonetheless”. The giant of a man clicked his fingers, and lights went up, revealing him to be a familiar face to Shono from the portraits his father showed him – Ulric Bezyzvestnykh himself, the commander of all the Awakened Militia. The bear shifter in his fancy officer attire looked tired, black bags under his eyes, silver beard braided into three sloppy braids. The young werewolf was aggravated by his father and pack leader being addressed so casually, without a title or at least patronymic, but he decided he could let this one slide for now. Father’s order had been carried out; but Shono’s service was just beginning.

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Russia: The Tree of Inefficiency

>> *And starting with the biggest fish in the pond, I asked our long-time contributor from Russia, Novichok, to describe the Russian men in green.*

>> *Tenchi*

>> *What a handle -- Novichok, Newbie, heh. Long gone are the days when I first came to the Shadowland boards, young, naive and full of hopes, still in the middle of my higher education. Much water has flowed under the bridges since then -- I graduated, served my time with the Border Guard, and went on to work among the National Supreme Soviet (NSS) support staff. I've risen quite high, and believe me, I've seen more than enough of the way Russians do things, to the point where it disgusts me. When their usual intrigues toppled my clique, I used it as a chance to get out of the whole deal . . . and here I am, writing up this document that almost betrays state secrets in a secure corporate compound far, so far from the Motherland.*

>> *Novichok*

War and Peace

Russian society has been getting more and more militaristic ever since the Fall of the Soviet Union, and significant reserves have been directed on the Armed Forces' development and modernization by the Russian authoritarian government. Despite the massive resources poured into it, the Armed Forces are still riddled by rampant corruption, cutthroat internal strife, and extremely poor logistics.

Serving in the army is the "sacred duty" of every Russian citizen, as stated in the Constitution and the recent Conscription Law of 2066, which gives a young Russian man only a few options. He might be conscripted at the age of eighteen, serve two years as a private, and maybe devote half a year of those to taking NCO courses and becoming a NCO. Or he might be admitted to a state-recognized university, which postpones conscription for as long as it takes to finish the education. His education, however, is combined with junior officer courses, and young specialists are still obligated to serve their term as lieutenants. The state gets to decide which branch of the Russian military machine a new conscript will be a part of. His only other option is to enroll in a military academy, with the goal of serving as a senior officer.

The Armed Forces are always hiring, and after the obligatory two-year term is up, many young Russian men sign voluntary contracts for a couple more. NCOs are especially prized.

>> *Voluntary my ass. How many times have I heard "Either you sign this here contract, Sergeant, or you're gonna be in trouble", I cannot begin to count. I'm still here, though, a civvy through and through. Frag you too, Major!*

>> *Kosyak*

>> *Just proves how much they want you, sonny. Just you wait a couple of years, and we'll see if I'll meet you again in Siberia.*

>>Polkan

The only way out of the obligatory service is being unfit for military service. Forged medical examinations are one of the main sources of corruption in the army, with everyone from the medics up to the inspectors getting their cut of the bribes from the citizens who don't want to lose two years of their lives just because the Supreme Soviet is planning one more little glorious war. However, since so many resources are devoted to supplying the army (and more importantly producing pseudo-patriotic army propaganda), many young men consider serving in the army to be the right career choice -- and indeed, many careers, such as security work or politics, are closed to anyone without military experience. What's more, for many denizens of the small poverty-ridden towns scattered throughout Russia, serving in the army is the only way to taste half-decent food with sufficient nutrients, get a profession, and find their way in life.

>> *Yeah, because killing people you see for the first time in the most efficient way is totally a profession, one to keep for life.*

>>NaSisteme

>> *There are plenty of service roles in the army, from mechanics to pig farmers, smartass, and for a lot of the conscripts serving their term is a way out of the hopelessness of the barrens. I've had kids as young as 15 who lied about their age when getting a SIN to get into the Army and a chance to stay as NCOs!*

>>Polkan

With a good deal of Russian GDP vanishing into the bottomless budgetary abyss the Armed Forces are, it's getting progressively more difficult to find decent goods and services in civil life. You want decent medical care? Have your contact place you in the Army hospital. Want a good tent or a flashlight that won't fall apart after a week of use? Seek out "surplus" sellers.

>> *It goes as far as military rations being sold in the food stores instead of convenience food.*

>>NaSisteme

>> *Rations? Take a look at the houseware catalogues. Whatever isn't made of used shells and written off military electronics is a conversion product of some military plant. By the way, officer rations contain the only canned meat around made of actual meat.*

>>Solution

>> *Militarization shows throughout the society, not just in home appliance production. I went to get some formal clothes today, and the nicest I could find was a copy of my full dress uniform, sans shoulder straps. They even had our battalion insignia.*

>>Kosyak

There is a form of racial segregation in the army, based more on personal qualities than just metatype, but only especially small humans still end up as tank drivers despite all the dwarves,

and only the most buff humans tend to serve in VV anti-riot Spetsnaz or VDV paratroopers along with the mostly ork and troll roster.

The new Conscription Law has changed the way women serve. They no longer get into the combat roles, instead limited to operating electronics far behind the lines, medical service, and alternative civil service.

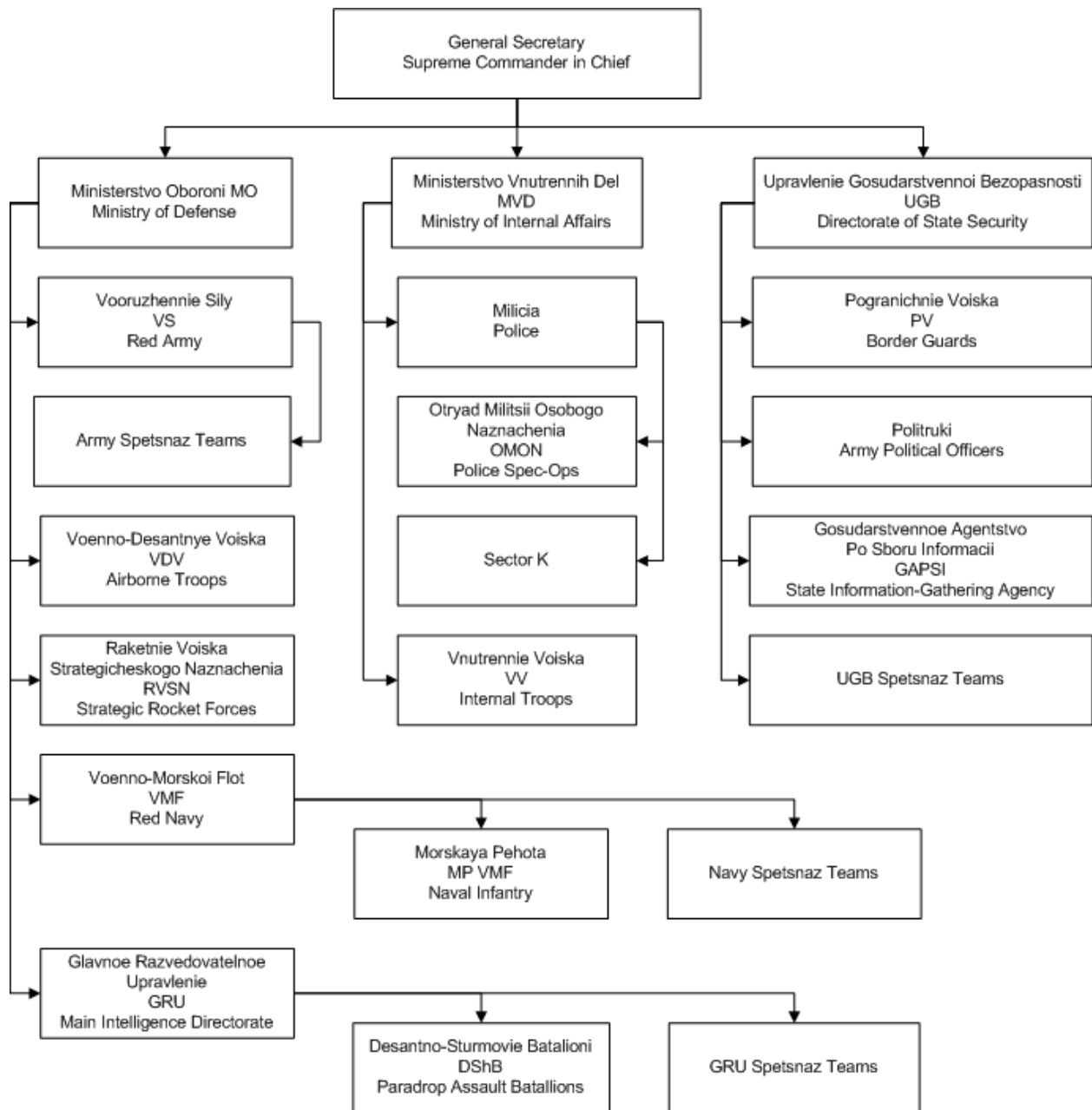
It has also changed the way a conscript chooses where to serve; more specifically, it has removed that possibility altogether. So now the military registration and enlistment office gets to decide where to send their newbies - giving them a handy new source of income.

>> *Phah. "Alternative civil service" - more like "indentured servitude for the one NSS likes best this year".*

>>*Red Anya*

>> *It's no wonder they had to remove the ability to choose the place to serve. With their way of losing subs to pretty much anything, the Baltic and Black Fleets would get zero conscripts if not for that.*

>>*Macha*



The first thing you should remember about the Russian Armed Forces is: there's a lot of them. I'm not talking "big battalions" here, I'm talking three damn ministries with full-scale military units, and god only knows how many with small spec-ops teams. Even the Ministry of Emergency Situations, created to handle natural disasters, has a Gamma Spetsnaz team to handle nuclear plant security.

Now, the second thing to remember is that every branch of that enormous military machine hates the other branches with a passion. Their rivalry is not condemned, but rather encouraged from the very top of the Russian political chain. It's seen as keeping everyone in shape, and conveniently also reduces the chances of a military coup. The branches themselves are also very stovepipe, departments often completely in the dark on each others' affairs.

Now, let me give you a quick tour around the Glorious Shield of Motherland, the Hammer of Righteousness, the Sickle of Truth, the Russian Armed Forces.

>> *Drek, man, cut the commissar-talk and get to the point.*

>> *NaSisteme*

Sidebar: Spetsnaz

Spetsnaz is quite an ominous word, its initial meaning obscured by dozens of years of incorrect usage. However, if you look at the way the designation is used in actual Russian Armed Forces, things become clear right away.

At the core of it, Spetsnaz, which is an acronym for “Spetsialnogo Naznachenia” (which, in turn, means just “Special Purpose”), is a catch-all name for any unit remotely fitting the description of spec-ops.

Red Army scout teams? Spetsnaz. MVD OMON anti-riot division? Spetsnaz. GRU sleeper agent saboteurs? You guessed it. The only limitation seems to be that anyone claiming to be Spetsnaz must be primarily an infantry unit.

As you might have guessed, Spetsnaz despises the regular forces, calling them “goblins” and “Sauron’s warriors” at best, “cannon fodder” and “minced meat” at worst. The regulars return the favour, thinking of Spetsnaz fighters as parade boys or gung-ho idiots.

Acting as a sponsor for a well-known Spetsnaz regiment is one of the traditional, yet still effective, publicity solutions for Russian corps.

Ministerstvo Oborony: the Ministry of Defense

However obvious that might sound, the Russian Ministry of Defense handles the bulk of the regular forces. MO units form the backbone of the Armed Forces, and have the heavy weaponry to back up that claim.



Red Army

The majority of MO's ground and air forces form the Red Army. When you think "dozens of divisions, thousands of tanks, and human wave tactics", you think Red Army. Army commanders do not believe in subtle measures. What they believe is the doctrine of concentration of fire, and the resilience of their soldiers.

The modern day Red Army has 96 divisions of motorised infantry, 71 armoured divisions, 10 bomber regiments, 17 fighter-bomber regiments, 4 recon aircraft regiments and a regiment of strategic bombers, if you don't count the numerous military installations scattered throughout the country. The Red Army is supposed to be a highly mobile highly effective fighting force – and they might as well have been, had not most of their vehicles been in inoperable condition.

>> *Well, it's not that dire, priyatel. The Siberian military district has it much better.*

>>Maslyakov

>> *A-ha, sure, with the General Secretary and the top brass from the General Staff buzzing to and fro like flies, that's hardly surprising.*

>>Kosyak

The Red Army is famous for cripple-producing hazing and the clannishness of the conscripts coming from the same corner of Rodina. Last year alone had 121 casualties attributed to hazing

and peacetime accidents. That's hardly surprising, minding that the conscripts have little to do besides beating each other's brains out. Very little actual combat training happens after boot camp for the regular forces. The common reason cited is lack of resources, but minding the abundance of those same "surplus" resources on the open market, it must be something else completely.

That same lack of resources is why only a very limited number of troops receives combat augmentations; generally, anyone below NCO level is right out. Everyone else gets to compensate with combat drugs, and infantrymen med pouches are full of cram, kamikaze, long haul, guts or snuff. Lately wearing a pendant containing an injector with K-10 around a neck for that last suicidal charge has become somewhat of a fad.



>> Again, the Siberian military district is vastly different – the MO has been buying Ares Gunfighter cyberware sets in bulk for years; and right now General Krotov's staff is in the middle of market analysis determining whether they should prolong the contract or switch to something else.

>>Maslyakov

>> Has "receiving bribes from Essen" always been called "market analysis" in the Red Army?

>>Corp Watcher

>> Yes. As long as anywhere else in the Armed Forces.

>>NaSisteme

>> Why won't you people shut up about those parade boys and the toys they get? Was it the Siberian district who fought back the Jihad?

>>Sluzhaka

>> Right, maybe it were the churkas from the Caucasus district wild divisions like you who did, huh?

>>Kosyak

>> More rhetoric like this, and I'm banning you both.

>>Tenchi

You may be wondering how the generals are planning to do anything at all with an army like this. Well, there are two answers to this question. First, when you have more than 1.5 million soldiers, and 20 million more reservists, you can have so much lead flying at the enemy at once that there's no real need to aim any more. Second, the training problem is most prominent among the infantry, since the vehicle crews are either contract soldiers after a NCO school or military academy trained professionals. MO is especially proud of their air aces.

>> *Yeah, proud enough to fail to admit the vastly obsolete aircraft build-up, poor maintenance and hardly any training of young pilots, relying instead upon the men as old as their planes.*

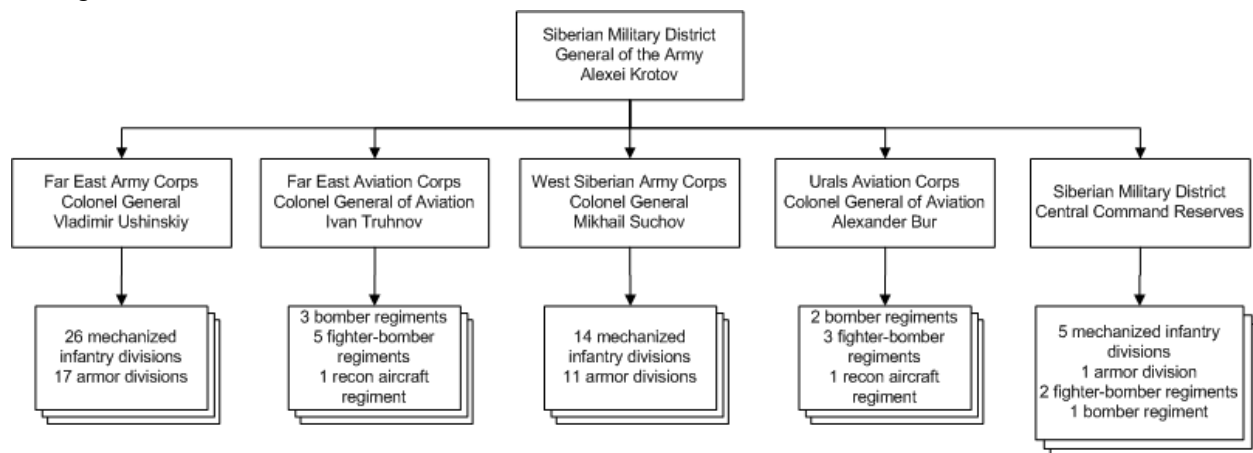
>>Angel

>> *Obsolete? Look, Chris, how many times could I have worn your Yankee ass as a glove during our last joint exercise?*

>>Vityaz

>> *See, this is what I'm talking about.*

>>Angel



Now, let's see how the Red Army is organised, using the Siberian Military District as an example. The idea of organisation is really simple: each organisational unit includes its command, several support units, and several similar organisational units of the lower level. The Siberian Military District is for all intents and purposes currently an Army. General of the Army Alexei Krotov commands it from his headquarters in Novosibirsk. Besides giving orders to four army corps scattered along the Yakut border, he also has direct command of some 20 regiments, each around 3000 strong, to be used should any part of the front start to crumble.

Currently positioned along the several-thousand-kilometre front, stretching from Irkutsk to Vladivostok, are the soldiers of the Far East Army Corps under command of Vladimir Ushinskiy, a distinguished figure in the army since the time he served as second in command to his namesake, Marshal Danko. Transferred from the Caucasus Military District well over ten years ago and adored by his soldiers, he's gained intimate familiarity with the local conditions of Siberia and Russian Far East.

Providing support for Ushinskiy's operations in the South-East is the Far East Aviation Corps of Colonel General of Aviation Ivan Truhnov. His HQ is just across from his land-based counterpart's, in the city of Irkutsk. With nine aircraft regiments, each about 70 vehicles strong, Truhnov is sure Russian dominance in the air will stay uncontested.

>> *Where are the transports?*

>> *Angel*

>> *They're subordinated either to Transport Aviation in the VVS, VDV divisions, or, if we're talking light transport LAVs and copters, directly to ground divisions.*

>> *Novichok*

Commanding the relatively smaller Western Siberian Army Corps is Colonel General Mikhail Suchov, transferred from Poland after the National Republic's fall in 2064. Cleared of charges of treason, this old guard Soviet revisionist is still taking the defeat in the Polish campaign very personally, and is eager to prove his worth again after receiving an extended state-funded Leonization. Rooted firmly in Omsk with a quarter million troops, he's planning for an offensive towards the oil fields in the delta of the Ob.

Running errands for the ferocious old man is Colonel General Alexander Bur, commanding officer of the Urals Aviation Corps. Despite being strong-willed enough to command six aircraft regiments, in the presence of Suchov he assumes the visage of a trembling youngster.

>> *What Novichok doesn't say here is that while Ushinskiy is indeed one of the best commanders the Red Army has seen for ages, Kamendin's regime doesn't trust him for one minute. The General Secretary hasn't forgotten the insolence Ushinskiy's mentor showed when he dared oppose him during the Elections of 2065, and Ushinskiy openly refused to turn his back on his old commander, still visiting him from time to time at his retirement dacha. So now his HQ is choke-full of UGB spooks eager for anything to stain the reputation of Colonel General.*

>> *Polkan*

>> *Just the contrary is true for Suchov, who was wise enough to throw his lot with the right man back in 64. Kamendin seems to find this old soldier's indomitable character much to his taste.*

>> *Solution*

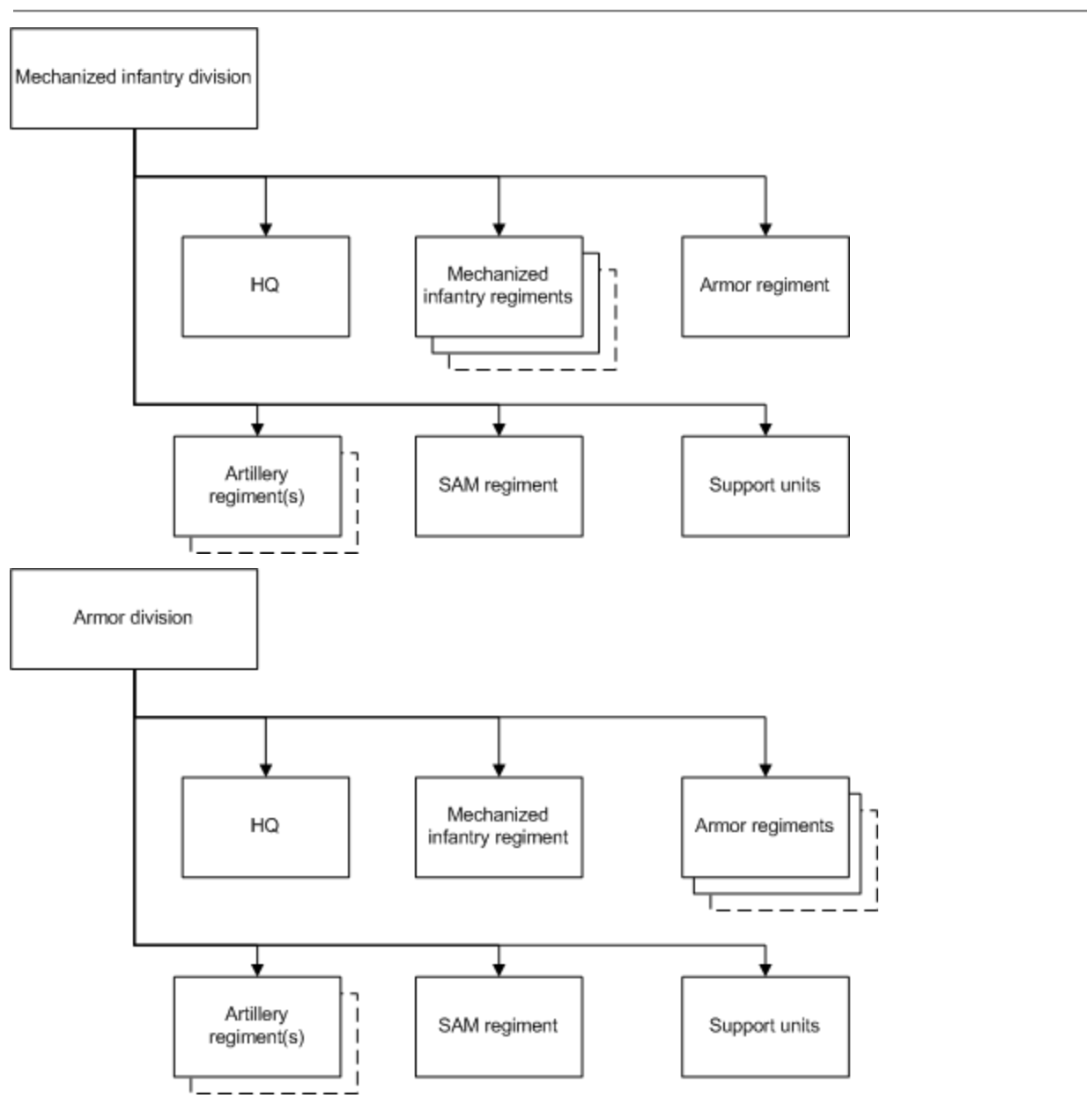
>> *Especially after that bastard tried his best during the trials to blame Danko for his own decision in 2064. Supposedly it was the retired Marshal's advice that made Suchov run like a dog with its tail between its legs. Just think about it. Still, that testimony was enough to land Kamendin in the General Secretary's seat, and for Suchov to be found innocent on all charges after that.*

>> *Kosyak*

>> *That sympathy is the only reason Suchov still doesn't have a bad case of lead poisoning.*

Thanks to being all buddy-buddy with that worm Kamendin he's guarded like royalty. We'll still get to him, one way or another, I swear! Just you wait...

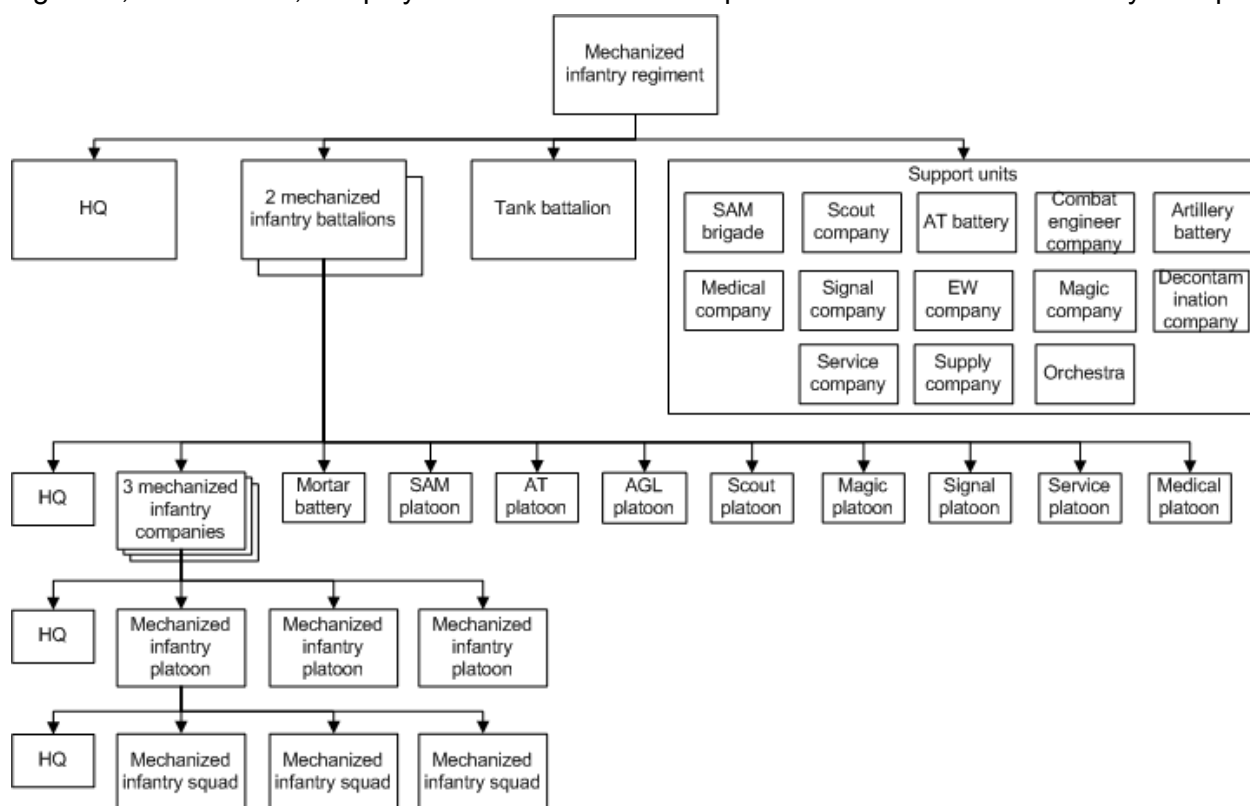
>>Battle Pole



So, just what exactly do those intimidating numbers of divisions mean? To answer that, let's look at your typical division's composition. The difference between an armour division and a mechanised infantry division is minimal, really. An armour division contains two or three tank regiments and an infantry regiment, and a mechanised infantry division includes two or three infantry regiments and a tank regiment. Both types of divisions also contain a couple of artillery regiments, equipped mostly with heavy self-propelled guns, a SAM regiment, and everything

you'd think ten thousand fighting men would need for support, including their own close-range air support, a couple of MRL artillery brigades, combat engineers, EW specialists, combat mages, field hospitals and field repair stations.

Now of course it's unlikely that you're going to fight a division. A regiment looks more like something you can take on, don't you think? Well, the least interesting type of regiments for runners is aviation regiments (and aviation does not have divisions). Those consist of about ten squadrons, each squadron made up of some three to nine aircraft. Bomber squadrons tend to have less aircraft, interceptor and fighter ones more. So, all in all, an aircraft regiment comes to about seventy planes. A mechanised infantry regiment is much more interesting; the Red Army takes pride in how self-reliant each of their land regiments is, and so the most likely men to hire freelance operatives, be it for direct combat or covert operations, are all on the regimental level. To keep things interesting and close to the ground, let's look at a real mechanised infantry regiment, 382 MSP, deployed in Chita as a part of the Far East Army Corps.



The 382 MSP (Moto-Strelkovyi Polk, Mechanised Infantry Regiment) is stationed on Haardah Haya military base under command of Colonel Valentin Prokhorov. Prokhorov is a hardliner military dog who has spent more time of his life on military bases around Russia than back home in Rostov. He's a responsible officer, rather strict but just, and very respected by his subordinates. Unfortunately, all of the above only applies when he's sober, and the more time he spends waiting, the less frequently that happens. His political officer, UGB Major Nikolai Soltenko, has pointed the problem out numerous times, but his efforts seem to be in vain. As chaos and corruption rule Haardah Haya, Soltenko has developed a paranoid streak, openly suspecting everyone of incompetence if not outright treachery. Minding his Assensing

professionalism, maybe he just knows too much about the men around him, though.

>> And Old Vulture Kolya would have long ago dismissed Prokhorov, if his reports hadn't been largely ignored ever since that story with the division politruk's wife. I heard he still claims he was framed, hah.

>>Maslyakov

Serving under Prokhorov are three Majors: Imeda Tsiniani, Gennady Mutko and Petr Emelyanov the Half-Man, each commanding their own battalion, several Captain commanders of support units, and a numerous host of staff officers, half of which are not even sure what exactly their authority is.

>> Petya the Half Man is a result of a story most hilarious. See, the tank battalion he's commanding? They lost a T-047 Mstitel heavy tank during the march to Haardah Haya. How that happened, nobody knows, but the tank just vanished. Prokhorov happened to be sober that day, and boy was he pissed. When a week had passed, and absolutely no missing tanks were found, he walked up to Petya, and had some tough man-to-man talk with him, which cost the Major an arm and half the skull along with an eye. Why his brain wasn't damaged, I have no idea, perhaps for the lack of one. Vulture was all over the incident, of course, but the command just let it slide as a peace-time accident. Petya's been chromed, but I don't think he loves our good commander as much as the rest of us anymore.

>>Maslyakov



The most prominent among the support unit Captains is Hillar Vetra, Magic company commander. This bland-faced, fair-haired ethnic Estonian hermetic is in good graces with the Colonel (especially in the mornings) and uses that influence and what little staff he has to stock on as much Yakutian telesma as possible.

>> Why does he is anyone's guess, but rumour is he's working on a spell to mass-disable Yakut-produced foci. I heard him mumbling something about needing some "imps" for that development, but hell if I understand what those mage types go on about.

>>Maslyakov

Pretty much the only man in the Colonel's staff who knows his business is Major Artem Lapyev, his zampotyl (supply officer). With his bald head full of cyberware and his expression always cold as ice, Lapyev is a fine calculating machine.

>> A fine machine requiring fine greasing, if you know what I mean.

>>Maslyakov.

Major Imeda Tsiniani commands the second battalion of mechanised infantry "baboons", if you believe his own words. Hailing from Georgia, Tsiniani chose a military career in the largest military of the region back when his country's graces with Russia were still good. By the time he

was out of the military academy, of course, everything went to hell, yet he chose to stay with the guaranteed employment of the Red Army. Were it not for the constant stream of racist jokes from Major Gennady Mutko, the regiment's trickster, he might even be happy about that decision.

>> Prokhorov looks down upon fighting between his subordinates- quod licet Jovi, after all. So Tsiniani's been trying to instigate some of his "primates" to steal Mutko's good luck charm Vetra made him for some time instead as revenge - to no avail so far, nobody's stupid enough to steal from a Major!

>>Maslyakov

The four leading "baboons" are Captains Ivan Kovalenko, Maxim Zaycev, Sergei Kuznetsov and Anatoly Kaltstein, in command of first through third platoons of the second battalion and its mortar battery, respectively. Tsiniani makes sure Kaltstein receives a good dose of the same treatment he himself gets from Mutko, also making occasional metaracial remarks at the expense of automatic grenade launcher (AGL) platoon troll commander Lieutenant Vasily Seriy.

>> Seriy couldn't care less, though. His strength makes him good-naturedness personified, his favourite joke to lighten up the atmosphere being "Guess what's in my clenched fist". From my experience it can be anything, from an anti-tank grenade to an armoured military commlink.

>>Maslyakov

Captain Zaycev is eternally pissed off by the fact that he doesn't get his own staff, unlike his direct superiors. Lack of a personal aide makes him especially anxious. So this dandified and vain man makes sure his three direct subordinates, Lieutenants Vladimir Yamsovskiy, Vseslav Charodey and Mikhail Shaposhnikov, know about that full well. To make sure, he reminds them around ten times a day.

>> And of course, the Lieutenants call him milksop and faggot behind his back. They're well justified - I have it on good authority that Zaycev hits on the most downtrodden soldiers of his platoon, but just this week his last "aide" was demobbed, leaving him looking for a new one - or at least some solid shoulder to cry on from outside the base.

>>Maslyakov

Lieutenant Charodey, however, is now little concerned with his commander's antics. At least, much less than with thinking of how to hide the fact that Sergeant Petrenko from the second squad knocked the teeth out of Private Meret Janhoev for oiling his AK with the same rag as their BMP's gun, and how to make the regimental service company fix the jammed gun on the BMP of the first squad without reporting Sergeant Alekseev for providing insufficient care and oiling, and why Sergeant Sidorevsky reports seven clips of AK ammunition "missing", and where to get some more long haul to feed his addiction.

Sergeant Gleb Sidorevsky is not concerned with the coming retribution, however - his debt to the Vory is taking what little place in mind he has free from thinking about that gal he met at their

den.

His seven subordinates concern him even less, and of them Chelemet Beigutanov the least. And unjustly, since Chelemet is currently thinking what would be better - shooting the rest of his squad for making him clean their piss off the floor of the barracks last time he was on duty and making him handle the grenade launcher, thus adding some 30 kilograms to the weight he's carrying in full marching order, or maybe just shooting himself.

>> Now wait a second, comrades. I don't get it. A Russian division gets an artillery regiment and a SAM regiment, right? Then, a Russian mechanised infantry regiment gets an artillery battery, a SAM brigade and an AT battery? While a mechanised infantry battalion has an AT platoon and a SAM platoon? I don't get it, just how excessive can you get?

>>Arctic White

>> No, see, there's a difference. All those have different equipment and vehicles, based more or less on the distance to the enemy they are supposed to be. Say, an artillery regiment provides artillery support for the whole division - these are some heavy SPA pieces, 203 mm or more, and they lob their shells from dozens of kilometres away. Now, the artillery battery the infantry regiment gets? Those are more close-range support guns - think 152 mm howitzers providing support for their regiment in a few kilometres range or so. The same goes for SAM - division's SAM regiment has S-800 complexes waiting for incoming heavy bombers, stratosphere recon craft and other serious threats. Regimental SAM brigades have Brigandine artillery SAM vehicles, providing cover from enemy CAS runs and LAVs for the whole regiment. Finally, a battalion's SAM platoon is just a handful crews with man-portable weapons like Spitzza surface-to-air missiles to defend their fellow men against aircraft with relatively close firing range like copters, drones or LAVs.

>>Novichok

>> Medics work the same way. If your own med pouch and your squad's assigned medic can't help, but you're still alive anyway, the boys from your battalion's medical platoon will pull you out behind the lines and patch you up. If you have serious injuries, the regimental hospital can sew you together (including replacing missing limbs) and throw you into the grinder again. If the regimental docs are helpless, the divisional hospital will provide you long-term care.

>>Kosyak

>> What does that mean for the army mages, then?

>>Smiling Cat

>> The magic platoon of an infantry battalion is usually half a dozen mages providing counterspelling, banishment of hostile spirits, and rarely (when time allows) direct combat magic and conjuration. Regimental mages do more long-distance combat casting, astral recon and counter-recon. Finally, divisional Awakened are mostly ritual casters, astral combatants, and high-profile conjurers.

>>Solution



Sidebar: Magic in the Army

The Awakening revolutionised warfare, a fact promptly proven by the Great Ghost Dance war. While the state's military is often a cesspool of conservatives, nobody could deny the incredible effectiveness of but a few mages against a whole super-power's army, and although army commanders around the world experienced as much fear and hatred towards the Awakened as everyone else, simple fear of falling behind the times made them go on a real recruiting rampage, one that is still ongoing to the modern day in harsh competition with the corporations. Different militaries organise their Awakened forces differently, spilling the talent among the ranks, forming Awakened-only units, or combining both approaches in different combinations. Regardless of organisational structure, however, the Awakened have a host of unique abilities, from astral recon, conjuring and ritual casting to counterspelling offensive magic slung at their comrades or magically assisting in interrogating important prisoners of war. The diversity of those abilities and the critical importance of their successful usage, aggravated by the low numbers of Awakened available for the militaries, makes mages an extremely rare sight in the midst of frontline fighting, with rare exceptions such as spec-ops teams or fighting highly resilient opponents resistant to conventional weaponry.

Sidebar: Army Jargon

Runners used to UCAS military talk may be surprised how much Russian Army jargon differs from it. It is much less formalised, and much less removed from normal Russian speech. However, some most used words and idioms you should know if you consider passing for their own among the Russian brass.

Blockpost - lit. "blocking post"; security checkpoint or forward observation point

Boetz - lit. "fighter"; soldier, combatant. A common way to address a non-ranking comrade

Dookh - lit. "ghost"; enemy guerrilla fighter

Goruchka - lit. "flammable"; fuel

GSM - lit. "flammable and lubricating materials"; fuel and oils

Gvardeets - lit. "guardsman"; a common way to address a non-ranking comrade in the VDV; underscores the elite Guards status of most VDV regiments

Kalash - standard issue AK assault rifle.

Kupol - lit. "dome"; standard army round parachute

Lozhis - lit. "get down!"; incoming!

Mabuta - no literal translation; a nickname for the rank-and-file soldiers used among the spec-ops units

Matras - lit. "mattress"; cruciform parachute

Nikak net - lit. "no way, no"; negative

NZ - short for neprikosnovenny zaspos, lit. "untouchable reserve"; survival reserve stock

Otrabotat - lit. "do work"; to provide air or artillery support on coordinates

Ptiza, ptichka - lit. "bird, birdy"; any aircraft

Scha - lit. "in a moment"; indicates either affirmation or willingness to delay action for a short (subjectively) time

Slushaus - lit. "listening to you"; affirmative, orders received

Specialist - a spetznaz operator

Telnik, telnyashka - dark color and white striped undershirt, an iconic part of the uniform of the Red Navy, the VDV and the Naval Infantry. Often worn by retired servicemen, as well

Tovarisch - comrade. The proper way to address another soldier is "tovarisch" followed by rank or surname, for example "tovarisch polkovnik" - "comrade colonel"

Truba - lit. "pipe"; any fittingly-shaped squad support weapon, such as an RPG, an ATGM, or a large-caliber recoilless gun

Ushel - lit. "went out"; air support mission over

Vas ponyal - lit. "understood"; received and understood

Vertushka - lit. "spinner"; copter

Veslo - lit. "oar"; a sniper rifle. Also frequently simply called **sniperka**, especially by conscripts.

Vysota - lit. "height"; hill, elevation. Often used to mark locations in conjunction with its height, if nameless, such as "Vysota 776"

Zachistka - lit. "cleaning"; clean-up operation

Zelenka - lit. "brilliant green"; greenery, vegetation

Zhestyanka - lit. "tin can"; any personnel carrier or infantry fighting vehicle. Also frequently called **korobka** (lit. "box") and **grob** (lit. "coffin")



Red Army Spetsnaz

Army spetsnaz is not afforded the same measure of respect as the rest of Russian spec-op teams, especially the UGB or GRU teams, and for a good reason - the Army boys don't have the equipment or the training usually associated with the title Spetsnaz.

The units considered to be spetsnaz in the Army are mostly concerned with frontline scouting, target designation for artillery and aviation support, sabotage directly behind the enemy combat lines, and fortification assault operations. They rarely need or employ complex tactics, preferring instead to overwhelm the opposition in a single well-directed strike.

These conscripted special forces have their equipment only marginally better than their regular service comrades, but usually sport a few implants picked to help them in their most frequent mission patterns. However, they make up

for quality with quantity, typical teams including up to 30 men and heavy weaponry up to light armour level.

>> *Demobbed Army Spetsnaz boys also make up the majority of bodyguards, bouncers, and enforcers on the streets of Russian cities.*

>>Red Anya



VDV

VDV stands for Vozdushno-Desantnye Voiska, Airborne Troops. Russian airborne, easily distinguished by their relatively light armour, light-blue berets and white-and-blue teln'yashka undershirts, are fiercely proud of their heritage, combat prowess and projected combat lifetime of several hours, going as far as proudly calling themselves kamikaze. VDV gets only the most gung-ho, well-built and self-confident recruits from the recruiting centres. Usually that means orks and trolls, with only an occasional human in between, Ryasan VDV Military Academy owing its nickname Trogwarts to that fact. VDV totals eight divisions, two of them being training divisions stationed in the Military Academy, and the rest of the force scattered throughout the Motherland.

>>Novichok conveniently omits the more secretive VDV units, on which the government gives no comments. Some are known to the general public, like the 45th Guards VDV Recon Regiment, subordinated to the GRU for when they need that little drop of conventional firepower. Others still, small highly specialised units, are at best known only within the intelligence community.

>>Solution

Unlike the army, VDV paratroopers spend their days in constant training, trying to one-up each other. However, VDV regiments are known for fierce team spirit as soon as it comes to interacting with any external entity, going as far as commanders rewarding the troopers for sticking up for their own in interregimental fights and punishing for not doing so, regardless of the fights' reasons and consequences.

VDV tactical doctrine mostly centres around large-scale paratroop insertions, as much as a regiment of troops landing at once, striking at less protected points of strategic importance, and holding them until the main Army force arrives. Should no help arrive, or should mission parameters call for that, paratroopers are also taught to scatter into surrounding landscape in small groups, using surprise strikes and guerrilla warfare to deal maximum damage.

VDV equipment and vehicles are generally lighter than their Army counterparts, with carbines replacing full-size assault rifles, light machine guns replacing their heavier army counterparts, and BMD light IFVs, light tanks like Kalmar and small-bore SPA like Yota providing armour support. Paratroopers also enjoy regular drone support, especially prizing flying drones. VDV equipment is usually slightly better than that at Army disposal (even the bayonets are made of better steel), and is always kept at top-notch condition.

Unlike the Army, VDV troops don't have the Awakened separated from the regular troops. There's quite a number of adepts among the ranks, Ryasan Academy providing them with extensive training. Adepts typically make for higher ranks than their non-Awakened comrades. Magicians mostly serve as officers' aids or hold officer positions, up from platoon level.

>>Traditionally, demobilised VDV boys go on to serve in the numerous private security enterprises other ex-VDV soldiers hold.

>>Red Anya

Sidebar: Metahumans in the Army

If you look past the anti-metahuman dogma still so wide-spread in some parts of the world, the Goblinization and the further humanity's splitting can only be seen as a blessing for any army recruiter. Essentially, if you forget about the skin colours and canine teeth lengths, an army can choose from an incredibly increased variety of physical ability sets, allowing it to fill the niches never before even thought possible to fill, or reliably find recruits capable of performing the jobs previously only suitable for the exceptional. The appearance of second-generation Infected and the SURGE only facilitated that, making even more previously unthinkable possible, like combat swimmers that do not require any equipment to stay underwater indefinitely.



RVSN

Raketnye Voyska Strategicheskogo Naznachenia, or just RVSN, is Russian for Strategic Rocket Forces. RVSN handles two of four components of the Russian nuclear arsenal: the mobile and silo-based ICBMs, while the Red Army handles the strategic bombers, and the Red Fleet controls the remaining sub-based component, both under control from RVSN representatives and ever-watchful UGB eye.

Always on standby for a command coming from the General Secretary and the Minister of Defense, RVSN is one of the few branches of the Russian military machine kept in constant operational readiness. It is also one of the smallest branches, since the silo-based component took a heavy hit with Yakut independence, when two silo positioning regions under Irkutsk and Krasnoyarsk had to be destroyed so as not to fall into separatist hands.

RVSN currently only has two missile divisions, and even those are not full-size Red Army ten thousand men strong ones. Russian missile silos are currently mostly located under Voronezh, Saratov and Kaluga; mobile launch vehicles, on the other hand, manoeuvre throughout the less populated areas of the European part of the country.

RVSN is only staffed with troops specially prepared for the duty as a part of their civilian

university education, earning its soldiers a derogatory nickname “pidzhaki” (“suit jackets”, hinting at them being more used to formal wear than uniforms). They are, however, nothing if not highly professional, making up for the usual failures of the Russian logistics with increased level of paranoia.

While the mobile launch platform crews partially rely on their escort forces for security, and thus are only mildly paranoid, the contingent of the silos have only themselves to count on, and thus are firmly in the “shoot first, ask questions later” camp.

Silos are surrounded with alienation zones several kilometres deep, ripe with sensors, high-voltage fences and tripwires, mines and automatic turrets. Those zones are patrolled by drones, and controlled by sentinels at the missile bases themselves. Silos are protected from air threats by S-800 complexes, and their guards pack some serious artillery firepower.

After the Lone Eagle Incident the RVSN is taking magical security very seriously, too - roughly each fourth soldier is Awakened (the highest percentage in the whole Army), and the rest are put through trainings to recognize astral forms passing through their auras, and know their way around their leechbands and biofiber wall fillers, as well.

>> RVSN is not as greedy with binding materials as the Army, either. So while the magicians they get are far from the best, you can expect them to be packed up with spirits - actually, even the mundanes may have a spirit with loaned services on call.

>>Solution

>> I also have on good authority that RVSN signed a major contract with Ares for FAB supply - strain I is surely provided, and on strain III accounts differ.

>>Ethernaut

Any lifesigns or vehicle signatures detected in the alienation zones are shot to kill on sight (except for obviously civilian planes, which are given a single warning to change course). The only exception to that rule are vehicles arriving by the single road leading up to the silo: single vehicles matching the signature identification of that belonging to the officer superior to the silo commander are let through to the roadblock in the middle of the alienation zone, and their passengers are granted further transport if successfully identified (assensing included into the identification procedure).

>> You make it sound almost like there is no way to get to the silo without the mumbo-jumbo.

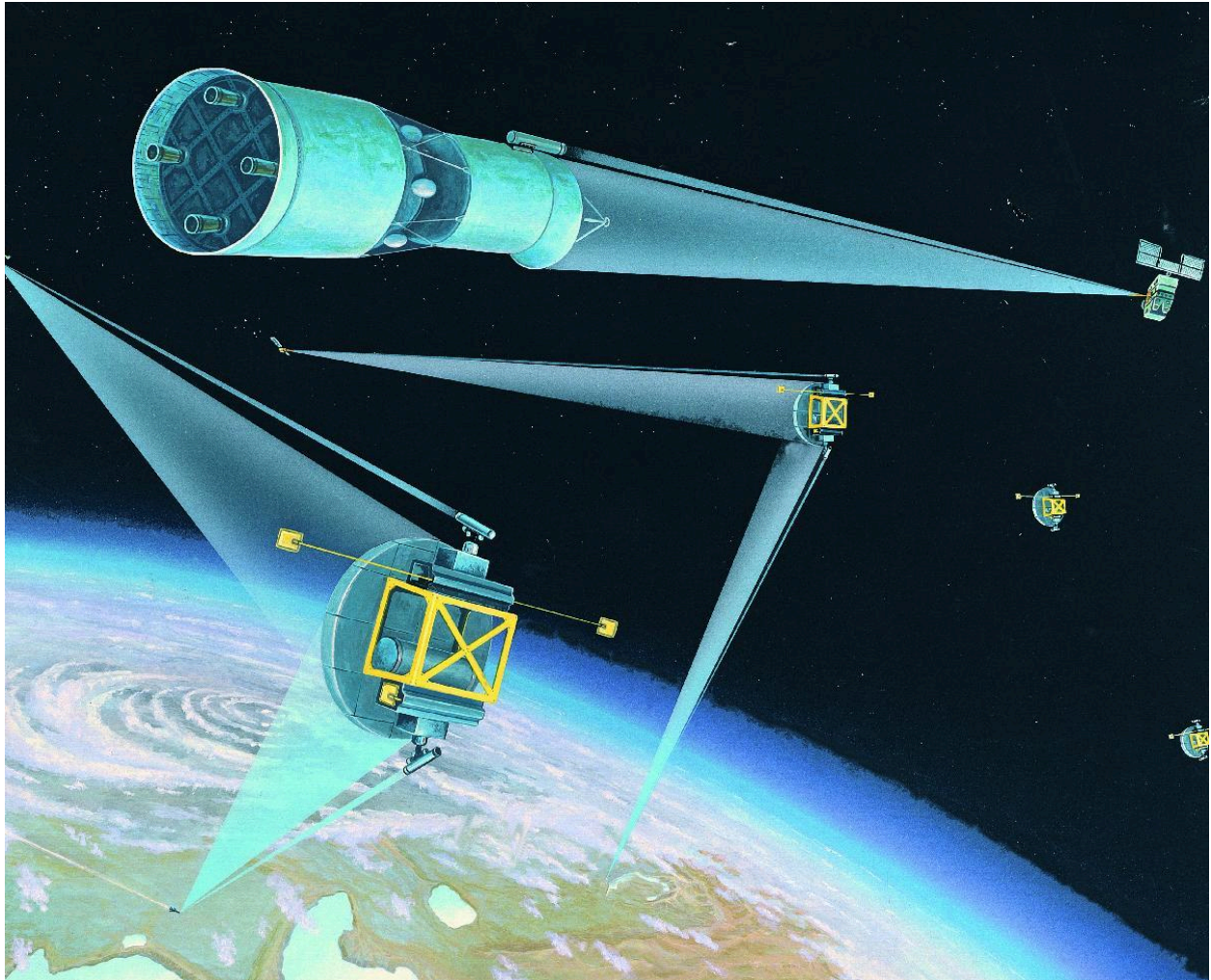
>>Kage

>> Well, once a year there are tech checkups, and those mean a large cavalcade of military vehicles arriving on a base. Maybe if you were to slip onto one... I still wouldn't risk that, there are easier ways to get a nuke.

>>HugMonster

RVSN doesn't handle only their namesake ICBMs, however. The SAM system built around Moscow is also their responsibility, as are Russian military space-based assets. Russia is not

nearly rich enough after losing Siberia to afford a full-scale space weapon platforms like the ones megacorps have, so RVSN Space Command only gets to handle a few sat constellations. Those are mostly comsats, weather sats and surveillance sats. Of course, of those a good deal is clustered on geostationary orbits over Yakut.



>> Mostly?

>>Green Ring

>> Mostly. What Novichok is skipping here (I don't know why'd he try to cover that up) is that Russia has been pouring resources into a net of killsats for years now. I guess having corp-owned weapon platforms looming over their heads makes the NSS scumbags nervous.

>>Don't Look Up

>> They are as much a joke as that Moscow region SAM system. Years from SOTA.

>>Battle Pole

>> Whatever. What are the sats actually good for? What's their weapon loadout?

>>Green Ring

>> *Those are heavy killsats, each featuring an ultracompact nuclear reactor coupled with ion drives, which gives them an almost unlimited service life. In addition to simple laser missile defence systems, each killsat is equipped with a kinetic projectile designed to blow any spacefaring vessel into harmless pieces in one shot.*

>>*Don't Look Up*

>> *Right, but that's not the whole truth. In fact, for at least half the killsats, the projectile is replaced with a nuke. I should know, I got the telemetry from those birds myself. Cost me an arm and a leg to set up a break in, I'll add. First, only a single sat, calculated by a complex algorithm, is available for connection at any one time. I got the algorithm from a corp ultrasecure node, don't ask me where, it's not there any longer. Second, they use unique military encryption. My friend had to help me with this one, don't ask me who, we're not friends anymore. Last, the ice on those toys is exactly what you'd expect from a major country's strategic asset - blacker than the Abyss. Dealt with that myself, and it almost got me.*

>>*Sapper*

>> *Ugh. What a fine example of ridiculous Matrix folklore. Besides, it's been known since the leak at design stage that the russkies used lasers with nuclear pumping for these sats, Sozhalenie model to be precise.*

>>*Coherent*

>> *Okay, okay, I get it, forget I asked.*

>>*Green Ring*



Red Navy

Even though the Red Fleet possesses a relatively small number of units, especially compared to the behemoth of the Red Army, it's still a huge, immensely complex organisation. The VMF (Voenno-Morskoy Flot, Military Sea-faring Fleet) is divided into five Fleets.

The Baltic Fleet is based in St.Petersburg, and gets all the new medium strike vessels, as well as hunter-killer subs. Vice-Admiral Oleg Voltsev at its helm became famous during the Kronstadt Uprising: he suppressed the rebellion on the cruiser under his command and left the mutinous harbour, sinking the first destroyer to dare lower the St. Andrew Cross, which earned the captain two out-of-order promotions.

>> The Baltic Fleet is known for providing its shipyards and docks to various corporation-owned vessels, thus allowing them to get around NEEC regulations on corp forces in the Baltic. Meanwhile, Voltsev is expanding his dacha, building up the third floor. Of course, these two facts are coincidental.

>>Red Anya

The Northern Fleet operates along the northern shores out of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. The

Russian boomer subs are listed in the Northern Fleet, and it is the first to receive new capital vessels.

>> *Why would a modern nation even need nuke submarines? And who are the Russians gearing to fight against in the North?*

>>Renee

>> *Seems like Trans-Polar Aleut is their most likely target. They've been aching for offshore oil fields for years now, remember the '53 incident.*

>>Gemini

>> *What good are aircraft carriers against Great Ghost Dance magic?*

>>Smiling Cat

>> *Ghost Dance has not been unleashed for a long time, and you know no worse than me how dangerous it is for everyone. Apparently, the NSS is hoping to amass enough forces to grab some ocean without fearing the repercussions, with enough overwhelming firepower left even after a Great Ghost Dance scale strike.*

>>Ethernaut

>> *That's a very... Russian approach.*

>>Smiling Cat



The Fleet's commander, Anatoly Magomedov, is struggling with a storm of bad PR raised by the citizen journalists and mass media alike. Allegedly, the convoys traversing the Northern Sea Route without escorts from the Northern Fleet are attacked by the Sabetta pirates almost ten times as frequently as those with such an escort.

>> On the off chance Magomedov is innocent, I am sure he's frantic to find the leak singing to the pirates.

>> Dr. Spin

The Black Sea Fleet, based in Novorossiysk and Sevastopol Free City (which it shares with the Ukrainian Navy), is a hotbed of spy activity thanks to no omnipresent UGB eyes in the Free City. The amount of action there is second only to the Caspian Fleet – the Pocket Fleet, as the Russian sailors often call it, - which hardly gets any capital vessels, but controls the fleet testing facilities along the Caspian coast.

>> Ukraine is taking on the Black Sea Fleet pretty seriously. They are obviously not up to the perspective of Russia re-igniting the Border Wars once again, and they're fed up with Russian

rule to the eyes.

>>HugMonster

Finally, the Pacific Fleet, its bases in Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky, is the only fleet with a chance to see serious action any time soon – and as such, it is the largest of the five. Until actual combat begins, the fleet receives new ships, hunts pirates and smugglers, and tries to block the recon actions of the Japanese Imperial State.

The buildup of a fleet has changed little over the last hundred of years. The largest vessels are still aircraft carriers, usually nuclear-powered. Gone are the days when the nation-states owned all the carriers of the world, nowadays most carriers belong to corporations or mercenary groups. However, with technological development, the principal significance of a carrier for a fleet has been reduced thanks to the availability of drones, which can be launched from most vessels, even those not purposefully built. Thus, only two of the Russian fleets include carriers: the Northern Fleet and the Pacific Fleet, and even these are YNT-built Shibanoji-class vessels refit to better fit the Russian fleet doctrine: each vessel is designed to be self-sufficient, as opposed to the more specialised roles assigned to ships by some other forces. Thus, the Russian carriers also have a battery of anti-ship missiles, and a massive array of self-defence weaponry.

The Russian fleet, just like the rest of the world, supplements or replaces carriers with amphibious assault vessels: small carrier-like ships, incapable of launching or recovering heavy aircraft, and instead operating a fleet of drones, VTOL planes and helicopters to support amphibious landings.

However, all but uniquely to the VMF, it also includes large nuclear battlecruisers, focusing on massive firepower instead of carrying aircraft. Not only do these have massive banks of anti-ship missiles, rocket torpedoes, and SAM missiles, they also bear the largest sets of artillery mounted on any modern vessel, including colossal battleship-calibre gauss cannons.

>> Just... why? Is artillery even effective anymore, especially at sea?

>> Panzer Papa

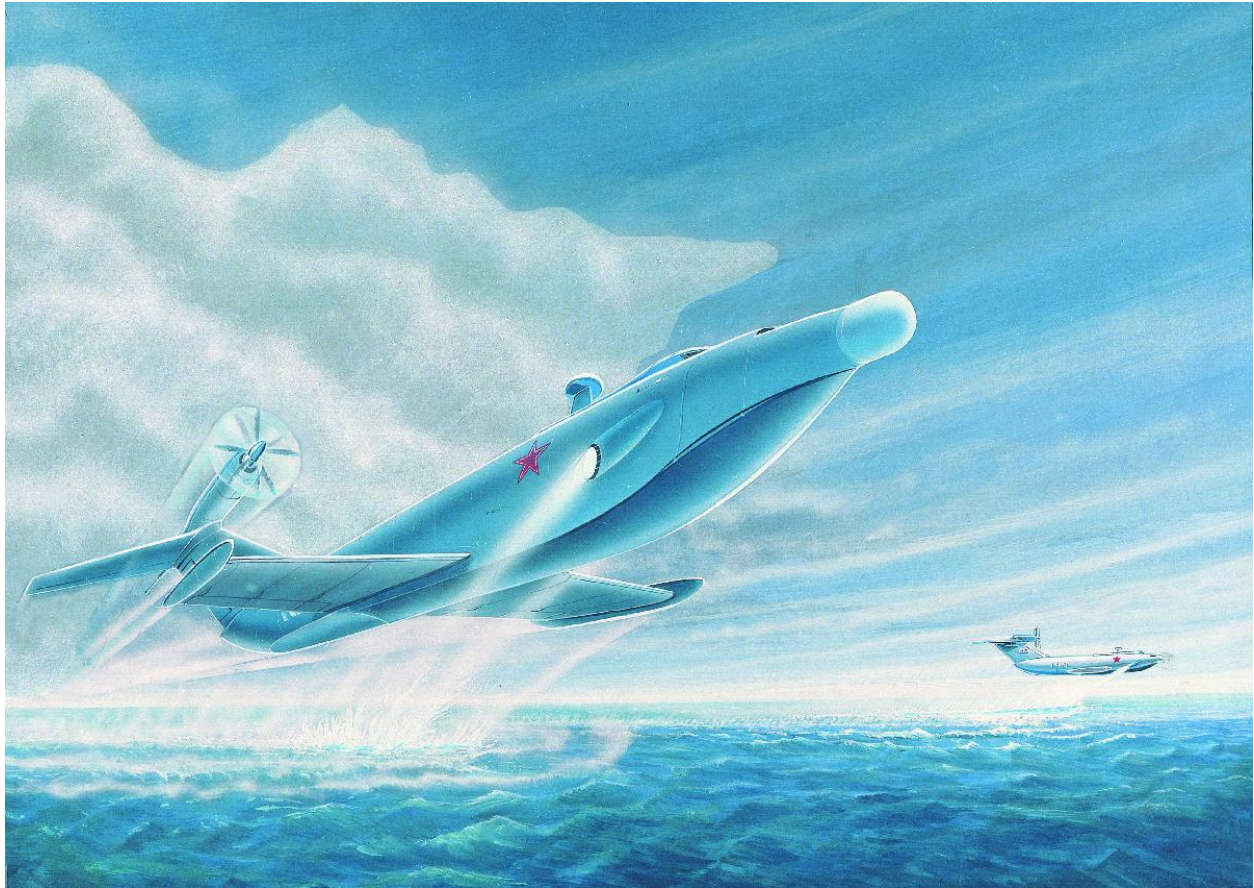
>> In a way. Lasers are more effective for defence than direct attack due to the sea haze, but gauss guns are decent. They are not as precise as missiles normally, of course, but they give a ship a uniquely high salvo weight. It is especially important against ground targets.

>> Albatros

Cruisers, destroyers and frigates form the bulk of the fleet, carrying both anti-ship weaponry, anti-air, and anti-sub. The VMF prefers each of them to carry all kinds of weaponry in various combinations; many other fleets prefer more focused approach. Modern technological development focuses on making these vessels faster and stealthier, and gauss and laser are rapidly replacing traditional chemical artillery. The ships designed for carrier escort are normally nuclear-powered, which gives them an essentially unlimited range.

The smallest vessels of the fleet, corvette-sized and smaller, are not usually intended for direct action against enemy fleet, instead used for patrols, hunting down enemy recon, and delivering

ground troops ashore. The Red Navy has an exception in missile boats, though: while miniscule, these carry a pair of anti-ship missiles almost as large as themselves.



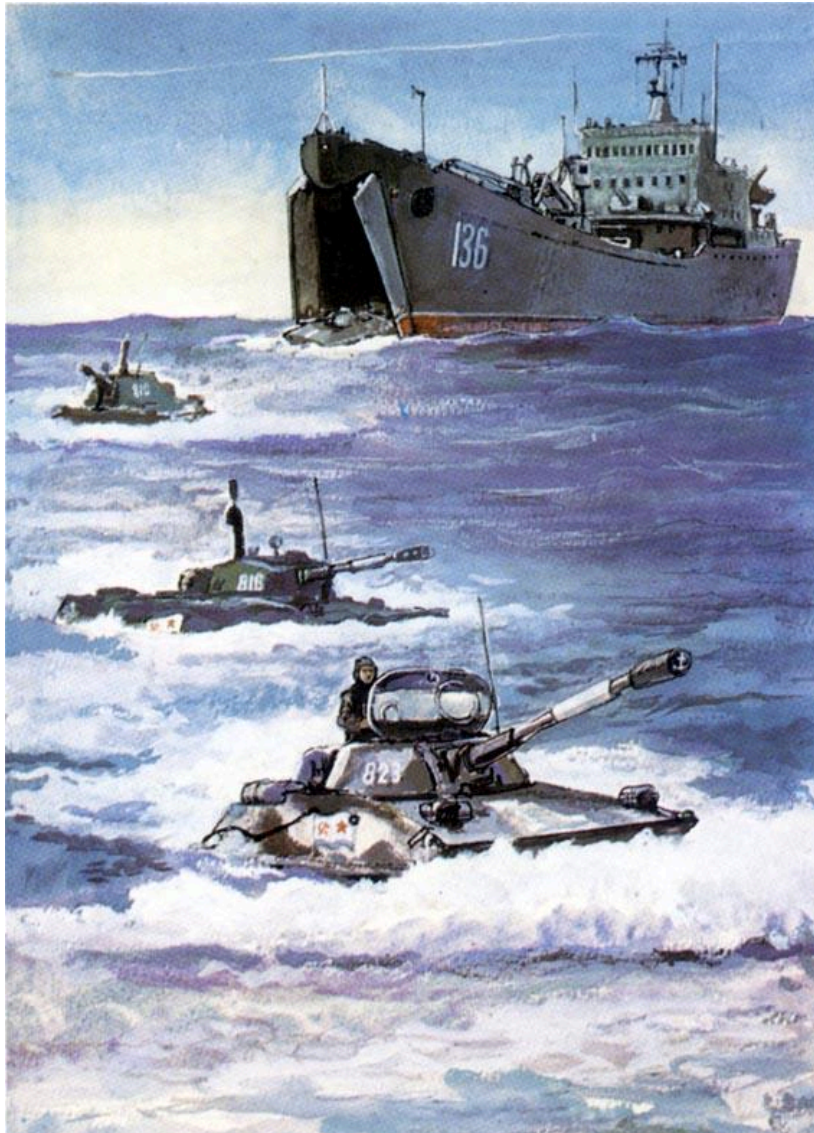
The landing craft range from large beacheable transports of age-old designs to hovercraft to ekranoplans and ekranoplanes. The VMF wields the largest hovercraft in the world, capable of transporting an armour company and covering it with artillery fire; at the same time, the fleet's landing capacity has been shifting in favour of ekranoplanes lately. While heavier larger ekranoplans are confined to the ground effect altitudes, and either transport significant numbers of troops or wield anti-ship weaponry, lighter ekranoplanes can both utilise ground effect or fly like planes. This limits their size, however, leaving them only able to rapidly insert a small fighting force.

Submarines have lost a lot of their invisibility with Awakening and appearance of summoned spirits, but a competent mage in the crew can still silence spirits before they reliably pinpoint the vessel. Large submarines are normally nuclear-powered still, either carrying a set of ICBMs, or a vast array of cruise missiles both for fleet engagements and attacking the shore.

Smaller submarines are usually designed for hunting other submarines, patrolling water areas, and engaging surface vessels. The smallest of them are also used for sabotage and harbour defence.

Combat ships of any fleet are assisted by a multitude of support vessels, from floating docks, tankers and hospital ships to minelayers, minesweepers, tugs, recon ships, and command ships.

A fleet forms a multi-tiered tactical net: each swarm of anti-ship missiles or torpedo shoal shares a tactical network, which is in turn included into a wide-area net encompassing fleet vessels, aircraft and often even ground forces and satellites.



Naval Infantry

The Red Fleet's Naval Infantry is the assault force intended for bridgehead landings. Using the doctrine of overwhelming firepower, the Naval Infantry uses amphibious medium tanks, IFVs and combat hovercraft for its landings, counting on copters and Fleet vessels for heavier fire support. It also has one of the largest drone forces throughout the Armed Forces structure.

Modern-day Naval Infantry counts as many as 10 divisions, with Black Sea, Northern and Pacific Fleets getting two each, Baltic and Caspian Sea Fleets each getting one, and Rostov Naval Infantry Academy counting as one more.

>> *Why would Russia even need a division of naval infantry in the Caspian?*

>>*Kage*

>> *To guard their oil rigs? Or in case of a new Jihad?*

>>*Arctic Wolf*

Naval Infantry works closely hand in hand with the VDV, which was initially largely formed out of its ranks, and even their uniforms are alike - Naval Infantry servicemen wear black berets and white-and-black telnyashka undershirts. The training routine and the metatype buildup are also closely similar. Their armour, however, makes the two easy to distinguish even for the colour-blind: the Naval Infantry prefers heavy suits, with floatation systems a must. Since the Naval Infantry is less limited in space than the VDV, they also carry heavier firearms, more heavy weapons and more diverse equipment, as well.

Sidebar: Drones in the Army

Delegating war to machines has been a trend for almost two hundred years by the 70ies. Drones and larger dogbrain-controlled combat vehicles are just par for the course. However, while they supplement metahuman soldiers in many a situation, the militaries of the world have so far failed to actually replace metahumans with drones altogether: coding a pilot program that'd be able to operate effectively on a modern battlefield is an excessively complex task, and the recent developments in the field cost prohibitively expensive for any mass army. Even remotely controlled drones' usage is limited by the effectiveness of modern electronic warfare, so while the militaries of the Sixth World possess significant numbers of combat drones, metahuman soldiers still make up the bulk of the armies.



Red Navy Spetsnaz

Each of the Red Navy Fleets has its own spec-ops units. Generally, those are brigade-sized regiments with highly specialised training and mixed conscripted and professional personnel. Just because of the nature of their work, they are much better equipped and supplied than their Army counterparts.

Most common, of course, are combat frogmen. Frogman Spetsnaz teams handle everything from scouting and sabotage of enemy vessels and underwater installations to defending against similar attempts of opposing forces. The most famous of the these teams is the Baltic Fleets 17th Special Brigade, also known as "Kalan". Its reputation jumped to legendary after several successful ops during the Euro Wars.

>> Right. Legendary. Under Major Denis Kamensky, sure. Except after that "insubordination towards the political officer" case in '69 Kamensky was discharged, and Major Evstifeev was transferred to replace him - from UGB Sea Border Guard, no less. Of course, half the team left along with Kamensky, last I heard of them they were running for Wuxing in the Southern Pacific.
>>Polkan

>> That reminds me - how do Spetsnaz members normally retire?

>>Solution

>> *Conscripts who serve in spec-ops teams just go on with their lives (unless they decide to stay with the regiment by signing a contract after the compulsory term, of course). They just can't leave the country for half a dozen years. Professionals, on the other hand, are on the state's bankroll for life - as they get older, they do more and more tutoring and commanding, and less and less actual combat work. By fifty, almost everyone is reduced to training the recruits - or commanding their comrades, if they've managed to achieve a rank high enough. By seventy, all but a handful retire to state-provided housing in closed cottage villages. The state provides for their needs, but they're not allowed to leave, and aren't afforded much contact with the outside world. Most write memoirs and combat manuals, or just spend time with their families.*

>>Novichok

>> *I guess that's more than most of us can expect for retirement, right?*

>>Argent

Less common, but still widely spread are mini-sub infiltration teams, airborne assault troops and patrol drone handlers. The latter have long been supplemented by animal trainer and handler teams, but recently, with the introduction of biodrones, those two have been largely merged.



GRU

The GRU, which stands for Glavnoe Razvedovatelnoe Upravlenie, and translates into Main Intelligence Directorate, is the Ministry's of Defense military intelligence. It is concerned with raising the Red Army's fighting chances first and foremost, but it's taking its task broadly: in addition to direct military espionage, it also busies itself with acquiring whatever technologies might give Russian forces a fighting edge; political espionage to determine Russia's enemies and potential allies, undermining the former's positions and helping the latter; protecting Russian assets from espionage attempts, and covert operations.

>> And by covert operations here Novichok means every dirty trick in the sleeve, including such niceties as assassinating anyone from front line commanders to top politicians, kidnapping, blackmail or sabotaging infrastructure, employing terror tactics. They're no strangers to hiring side talent, too.

>>NaSisteme

>> It's war.

>>Solution

While the GRU is a ruthless organisation, it takes pride in following its own code of honour (and scorns the UGB for their whatever-it-takes approach). The GRU outright refuses using lethal force against Russian citizens and on Russian proper. GRU operatives try to minimise civilian casualties whenever possible. Finally, GRU officers still believe in officer honour, with all the courteous behaviour that implies.

>> The GRU got in trouble more than once for that attitude. Back in '31, GRU assassins outright refused an order to eliminate the leading Yakut shamans, as Awakened Yakut was still perceived as a part of Russia back then, and they were all Russian citizens. Of course, that story ended with a good number of newly independent assassins.

>>Solution

>> Pretty much the same thing happened during the Second Euro War, when a saboteur unit was ordered to bust the hydroelectric dams in the Caucasus mountains after it became clear a lot of locals support the Jihad. A whole brigade was disbanded then, specialists scattered throughout the Armed Forces.

>>Polkan

>> The GRU can afford wasting trained personnel like this?

>>Arctic Wolf

>> It really can't. But they know the top brass approves their code of honour games because it builds a favorable image for the Ministry of Defense among the general populace. Politicos, however, go stark raving mad when they receive GRU's stone-cold "criminal order" replies.

>>Novichok

>> *Your "honourable officers" are just thugs, no less than the UGB operatives.*

>>Red Anya

>> *When working with treacherous scum like your Vory buddies? *shrugs* Honour has its place.*

>>Novichok

With Kamendin regime coming to power, the GRU took several major hits, the independence of its operations severely limited. There was even talk of the GRU becoming a part of the UGB - luckily, right around then the whole Romanov conspiracy story happened, and old man Kamendin decided he still needed a balance against the UGB.

DSHB

DSHB stands for Desantno-Shturmovie Brigady, Paradrop Assault Brigades. The DShB, in fact, is an umbrella name for several mixed regiments, all subordinated to the GRU. The only thing DShB regiments have in common is they're all formed of whatever best combatants one of Russia's ethnicities has to offer. Beside that principle, unifying each battalion by ethnicity, DShB units vary immensely. Despite the name, a good deal of those are not trained as paratroopers, but rather as armour or mechanised infantry regiments.

All are trained to high combat effectiveness, though, if not thanks to high training expenses then at least thanks to high morale, camaraderie and willingness to prove themselves. The DShB is mostly built up of professionals, but there are regiments receiving conscripts, as well - even those mostly consider themselves professional warriors, as befits a real man, though.

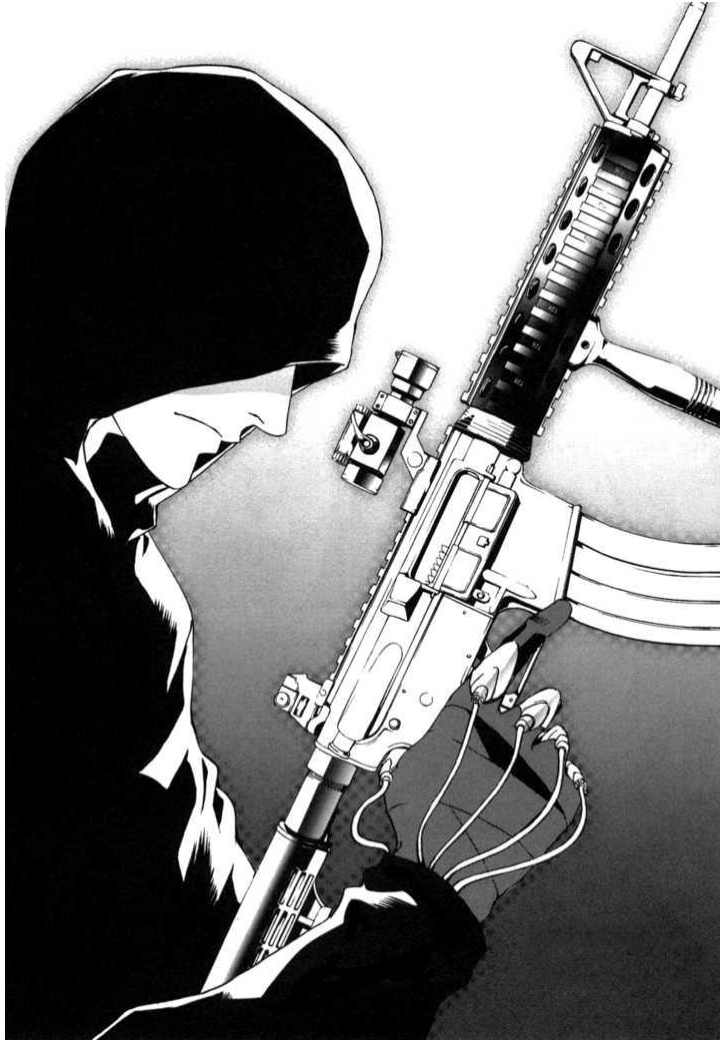
Again despite the name, the tactics of DShB units do not, in fact, suppose their usage as a direct assault force. Instead, they are intended for flanking manoeuvres and secondary offensive strikes, cutting through whatever hardpoints the opposition might have there.

>> *As a matter of fact, the DShB battalions are not limited to the multitude of war-like nations inhabiting Russia. I know for a fact about at least a Polish and a Belorussian units, built up of old rybokrat guard and other collaborationists.*

>>Warface

>> *Mercenary units working for the Ministry of Defense and not the UGB are likely to find themselves designated part of the DShB, too.*

>>Solution



GRU Spetsnaz

GRU Spetsnaz teams are simply the best the Ministry of Defense has to offer, the *crème de la crème*. Highly specialised, trained for life in everything from direct combat and high-value target sabotage to building and directing underground activist organisations, supplied with whatever toys money can buy, GRU Spetsnaz teams match the other famous spec-ops teams like Wildcats or Firewatch in effectiveness.

The most well-known GRU Spetsnaz speciality is sabotage. Working in teams of three, GRU long-distance drop teams are capable of bringing the brightest hackers, the most powerful mages and the most effectively cybered direct action specialists to bear. Each of the teams specialises in only a small set of potential target countries, their backgrounds established for years, targets long set, and knowledge of local customs and, of course, language flawless. The sabotage teams excel in living double, triple and quadruple lives, striking from the shadows and fading back into them before the results of the strike are seen. They are equally capable of wilderness survival, illegal border and front line crossing, and naturalising, assuming the guises most innocent.

Supporting those cells are the GRU sleeper agents. Living seemingly normal, successful lives, those are always prepared to execute a sudden strike or an assassination, their positions of trust opening an opportunity for a strike. Sleepers especially value binary explosives and toxins, and are usually perfectly supplied with those.

Finally, there are lone wolf agents. Employed wherever using a standard cell or a sleeper is deemed too risky or noticeable, lone wolves are mostly ex-cell leaders, taking their craft to the pinnacle. Rarely seen and never yet captured alive, lone wolf agents make it a point of pride to strike unnoticeably, with the deed impossible to trace to them, and preferably impossible to prove not an accident. As you might imagine, conspiracy boards on Mosaic datahaven are full of fanboys willing to think any accident at all to be a work of a lone wolf agent.

>> Naturally, the GRU Spetznaz do not have a combat uniform or insignia. They only wear a single bat-shaped badge on their full dress uniform at formal occasions.

>>White Wolf

>> From what I gather, the current GRU operations focus on Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Trans-Polar Aleut. In addition to the obvious target of Awakened Yakut.

>>Red Anya

>> You praise them so much, Novichok, it begs for a question - were you GRU-affiliated?

>>Kosyak

>> No, I am just a fanboy.

>>Novichok

>>Yeah, right. Thank you for your answer, comrade.

>>Truth



MVD: The Ministry of Internal Affairs

The Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs handles the multitude of law enforcement duties a nation like Russia needs, from revolt suppression to street order enforcement.

Militsia

The militsia (“милиция”) is the Russian version of police, and as such, handles the majority of crime investigation. Everyone from beat cops, car and foot patrols to magical forensics experts fall under MVD militsia authority.

Despite the MVD’s constant claims of their ranks being understaffed, the militsia is one of the world’s most numerous police forces, policemen-per-citizen-wise. High numbers of personnel mean that less budget is available to equip each, and thus the militsia often has obsolete, low-quality or poorly serviced equipment. However, such an oversized roster means that the MVD is capable of throwing a force vastly superior in numbers against pretty much any insurgency, and they still have enough budget to equip their grunts with crude but effective cyberware.

>> Militsia grunts are little more than glorified thugs, with IQs equal to the average temperatures in their basement cells.

>>DissiDA!

>> Right, the PPS (Patrulno-Postovaya Sluzhba, Patrol and Point Duty Service for those of you without a decent Browse routine) patrolmen are far from the sharpest tools in the box. They try

to make up for that with brutality and sheer strength. Though, frankly, I don't know who's better – the PPS grunts or the cunning squeezers from GAI (Gosudarstvennaya Avto Inspectsiya, State Car Inspection) who try to fine you literally at every turn.

>>NaSisteme

>> In a system as large as the militsia, all kinds of people can be found. Say, both the criminal forensics experts and the K-9 units proved to be far more proficient than I'd hoped they'd be.

>>Gulyaga



OMON

The OMON, which stands for Otryad Militsii Osbogo Naznachenia, Special Purpose Police Unit, is the Russian version of SWAT forces. The OMON get better weapons, armour and equipment than their regular duty militsia counterparts, and receive much more solid training on how to use

them. The MVD is trying to keep most OMON divisions as versatile as possible, rotating them between duties as diverse as anti-riot actions in the sprawls, anti-guerilla operations on the Caucasus, assaults against armed criminal enterprises, and such. There are, however, more specialised smaller units.

The OMON has a disproportionately large number of ethnic and metatype minorities among its ranks, yet some units are Russian human-only, on the contrary. That leads to wide-spread ethnic, anti-meta and meta violence, leading many to believe that OMON leadership has been infiltrated by the agents of... accounts differ here, options presented including everyone from the White Brotherhood to Sons of Sauron to the Orthodox Church.

>> *Seriously, if you think PPS grunts are brutal, you've never crossed paths with OMON brutes.*
>>Kosyak



Sector K

Matrix crime is handled by a specialised MVD unit codenamed Sector K. The name does not stand for anything, it is just a legacy of the time when every specialised small unit had its own

single-letter designation.

Sector K pushes hard to hire any promising comp science graduates from the Russian universities, competing ruthlessly with GAPSI recruiters. Their main selling point is the relative freedom Sector K operatives get in their operations, - or choosing their targets, for that matter, too.

Being under criminal investigation legally binds companies as well as individuals to provide access to any electronic systems at their disposal; however, of course, few are willing to follow that rule. That's where Sector K operatives waltz in, brandishing the best software MVD research institutes are able to develop. Discrete work getting clues before an investigation can be formally started is also highly appreciated.

>> Sector K boys are not as hardcore as GAPSI cowboys on average, but they still know their biz well. I've run in with them on Russian backbone systems during some surveillance work I did for my contacts – unlike GOD's ARM operatives, they have no standard persona iconry, and employ less obvious tactics – like, for example, the Nuke routines. As you see, however, they aren't all that bad.

>>E-kid

>> I've heard stories of Sector K incompetence more than once, actually; the prime example being the MVD confiscating a company's nexi cause the Ks were unable to import the data the company provided into their database because of the wrong format.

>>Chromed Accountant

>> Sector K and the GAPSI fight over any known technomancers so ferociously that it seems like it's a matter of honour and professional pride, not just Matrix efficiency. Both have gotten their share of Emerged, though - all the while publically spouting rhetorics aimed to perpetuate the technomancer scare!

>>Dead Deckers Society



Vnutrennie Voiska

The VV stands for Vnutrennie Voiska, Internal troops, and this is what forms the MVD's military arm. The VV is primarily intended for full-scale revolt suppression, anti-guerilla actions in rebellious regions like the Caucasus, and defending fortified urban positions during full-scale wars.

>>The Internal Troops are somewhat reminiscent of the Metroplex Guard, except they answer directly to the higher ups in the Ministry of Interior instead of the governor.

>>Across-the-Pond

The VV is used wherever the Red Army won't get involved – namely, against Russia's own citizens. While such a policy surely improves the Red Army's PR image, the VV has learned to enjoy the public perception of a bunch of dangerous, bloodthirsty tools, and aims to prove it at any given chance.

The VV is not as heavily armed as the Red Army, lacking aviation past copters for transport and CAS, armour past IFVs and light tanks, large-bore artillery, SAM units, or heavy armour for its troops. The training is on par with equipment – that is, the majority of VV conscripts receive even less instruction than their Army counterparts. The hazing is also said to be the harshest throughout the Armed Forces.

>>They have access to all kinds of neat functionality for riot suppression: not just traffic light controls that bypass any GridGuide, but putting street lights into stroboscopic mode, flooding the

central squares with through the fountains to disperse non-violent protests or using water supply potholes to douse the violent ones with cold or hot water. Those are all slaved to well-protected VV hosts, but if you can get inside or at least spoof competently, can be very fun to play with.

>>RiggiЯ

The Internal Troops are not without their own elite, however. Those most brutal, efficient and resilient earn their right to wear a crimson beret and a telnyashka with blood-red stripes after a series of torturous tests of combat and physical abilities, culminating in an initiation ritual, - holding their own against three future comrades for a minute in hand-to-hand combat. Those Crimson Berets are offered a great deal of respect and freedom at choosing their operations by their comrades and commanders, acting as the VV's spec-ops teams. They also see disdain or even outright hatred from the VDV paratroopers and the Red Fleet's Naval Infantry, since those two consider themselves to be the only ones with a right to wear berets and telnyashkas as a symbol of their elite status.

>>Crimson Berets are not the only Internal Troops elites. Dzerzhinsky Motor Rifle Division, stationed in Moscow, is extremely competent, thanks both to being staffed in half by career soldiers and frequent engagements in the city both with the rioters and organised crime.

>>White Wolf

Sidebar: Augmentation in the Army

By the 70ies, personal augmentation is omnipresent, and the militaries of the world are no different, thanks to many forms of augmentation being cheaper than even exercising the personnel to comparable results. While conscription-based armies mostly only do some minor upgrades among the rank-and-file and go full-on when working with NCOs and officers, professional armies are less limited by budgets and have longer service times on average to make good on their investment, so for them, heavy augmentation of the vast majority of the personnel is commonplace.

Two approaches to army augmentation are the most wide-spread: either trying to make each soldier a universal killing machine, or trying to combine metatype benefits with specialty augmentations to produce highly specialised warriors. The first one is more common when applied to rank-and-file grunts, the second is mostly used when it comes to outfitting spec-ops teams.



UGB: the Directorate of State Security

The UGB (Upravleniye Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, Directorate of State Security) is the chief Russian counterintelligence agency. However, just like most Russian governmental agencies, it's taking its responsibilities extremely broadly, and thanks to that, it also has departments handling intelligence (after all, foreign powers may compromise the state security

the UGB is so worried about!), ideological warfare, network security and warfare, propaganda, and whatnot. Thanks to a UGB ex-Director in the General Secretary's seat, the agency is faring now better than ever since the DRA reforms, with massive funding and choice personnel available for it. The UGB is omnipresent in Russia, with its agent network so vast and far-reaching it's been said about five percent of Russian population are working for them in one form or another, from reporting anything suspicious happening in their neighbourhood to working in numerous UGB-affiliated NII research institutions to being actual field agents, handlers or operative engineers.

>> The UGB is really good at not-caring, though. As long as your actions do not threaten the Russian state (including the ability of the General Secretary to control it overtly or covertly), you're in the clear. Once you step on their toes, the UGB will go all out after you, though - and they don't really bother with legal limits.

>> NaSisteme

>> There's no other way. Unless there's a strong national leadership capable of fully controlling the country, we're going the way UCAS went: total anarchy, all-against-all warfare in the streets, corps owning everything worth owning, and as the final result, the nation falling apart.

>> Callsign6230

>> So how's that different from what's happening in Russia?

>> NaSisteme

The Chief Director of the UGB is still Rassily Romanov, a pupil and a staunch supporter of Kamendin. In no small part thanks to him his then-retired former mentor got the General Secretary's seat, and Kamendin has been paying for that support generously. Romanov himself is still a Sauder-Krupp man, doing his best to further the corp's interests without being all too obvious about that.

>> It's still sort of an open secret, though, and a reason for mocking throughout Russia.

>>Kosyak

The most recent and glaring example is the career of Sasha Kalinsky, a transfer from SK Prime. While the youngster has little to no experience in anything beside field black ops, he's made a stellar career, replacing Zeta ImpChem-backed Boris Petuchkin as a head of Department R, which handles foreign intelligence, and is often regarded as the prime candidate to succeed Romanov should he shift his attention towards politics.

>> His subordinates, however, are hardly ecstatic about Kalinsky's competence level. While he acts all stern, in fact he isn't able to keep order even among his middle management, where he's made a few enemies with his attempts at SK-style micromanagement, and Dept. R's global operations have suffered for that.

>>Thorn

Another Romanov's man in the agency is Vsevolod Stozharov, whom the Chief Director put at

the helm of Department K, domestic intelligence, once Kamendin's regime had instilled itself firmly enough. Stozharov is a man whose loyalty to Romanov overwhelms even his own ambitions, one who's always made his career by sternly supporting a single leader. Romanov suddenly giving preference to Kalinsky seems to have hurt his feelings a lot, though, and despite putting on a pleasant smile, he's doing his best to undermine Sasha's positions.

>> I believe Stozharov might have some grand plan for that, considering the apparently non-linked minor runs the Dept. K's handlers have been giving to runners throughout Russia and bordering nations.

>>Safe-n-Sound

>> May be, or maybe it's just one of those Dept. K's large-scale operations.

>>Novichok

>> Department K has always been eager to stomp out any dissidence or, God forbid, separatism, and they've never shied away from hiring runners to do the butcher's job.

>>DissiDA!

While of the numerous UGB departments R and K are the ones with the most clout and the ones determining Russian realpolitik, it's department Y that has personally me the most worried. Tasked with keeping the Russian nuclear arsenal safe and sound, it has so far been hilariously bad at its task. Having confirmed ties with Winternight and struggling to secure the tactical-level portable charges has done nothing for its image, either. While Alexey Domoselov, appointed to head the Department in the wake of the second Crash, reports major improvements in his dept's operations, I just can't trust the organisation, minding that a full-scale purge has never been commenced.

>> While Y might indeed be a ticking bomb, current activity in the UGB is centred around Department S, internal security. The Department has been around forever, naturally, but its influence has been limited until recently, when it sprang to life after its old head Sergey Petrov's retirement and an appointment of a new energetic replacement, Yuri Sokolov, said to be favoured by Kamendin himself. Sokolov's activity has moved far past formal yearly reports to his department filed by other Departments before his appointment, and his proposal to send his dept's "liaisons" to the other parts of the UGB to keep an eye on them has been approved by Romanov already. While the new spies-spying-upon-spies haven't reached any real efficiency yet, and none of their reports have yet lead to any action, the paranoia in the agency has grown severely.

>>Safe-n-Sound

>> So, Safe-n-Sound, you say? I wonder just who you might be, so talkative, so charismatic...

>>The All-Seeing I



PV

The PV (Pogranichnie Voiska, Border Guards) is a rare case of a counterintelligence agency possessing its own full-scale military units. The Border Guards' role is, quite obviously from the name, guarding the state border with the force of weapons. In case of a military intervention the PV units are supposed to enter combat first, delay the invaders for as long as possible, and then fall back, passing the fighting to the Red Army units, giving those time to prepare. The Border Guards are supposed to stay inside the country's borders by the doctrine, but this instruction is all too often negated as the UGB command sends its armed men on Awakened Yakut territory. Serving in the PV is not that different from serving in the Red Army - the same grating boredom, the same insufficient training, the same hazing. The real difference becomes noticeable for the regiments on active duty, since the need to actually guard the borders against the multitude of transgressors leaves little time for hazing and is a sort of training in and by itself.

>> *The Border Guards also guard the Russian embassies around the world.*

>> *Truth*

The PV regiments are hardly different from the Red Army ones organizationally, as well. However, they are devoid of the heavy weaponry like large-bore artillery, strike aviation, or heavy armour, and thus resemble the VV in their combat ability. The maritime part of the PV is

heavier armed, and operates corvettes and even frigates on the Russian sea borders.

>> *And they hate the smugglers with burning passion, it seems. Unidentified craft can easily be greeted with a SAM or a torpedo, for subs.*

>> *The Flying Canadian*

>> *They pay for smuggler pelts, too.*

>> *Eagle Eye*



Politruki

Political officers have always been a part of the Red Army units, ever since the October Revolution, making sure the officers are still loyal, and no signs of counterrevolutionary thought are present. The institution briefly disappeared in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but the National Soviet Reconstructionists promptly put it back in the Armed Forces once they got to power. While in the times of the Soviet Union political officers answered only to the counterintelligence predecessors of the UGB, as long as the Red Army-backed Reconstructionist General Secretaries stayed in charge, the GRU handled them. The command saw that as a means to limit the influence of the UGB in the army, and even the last Red Army-affiliated General Secretary, Dzhermiya Ogurzneva, came from the ranks of political officers, having served in Poland.

However, once the Kamendin regime came to power, among the many fixes of that which was not broken, it deemed necessary to return the command of politruki (plural, singular politruk) to UGB hands. Thus, now every noticeable officer has a UGB spook standing over his shoulder. The fact that the UGB is doing its best to ensure most of the political officers are Awakened isn't making the paranoia any lighter, either, especially minding the power a political officer has over his unit at times of war, - up and including executing the commanding officer in the field for perceived treachery. Even at peace, snooping and sniffing of the politruki has brought trouble to more than one worthy officer.

>> *...And jobs to more than one Russian shadowrunner. Army officers are always eager to pay someone for getting them off the UGB hook.*

>> *NaSisteme*

>> It's not always as bad as Novichok is describing it. Being independent of the standard Army command hierarchy allows the political officers to freely accuse the corrupt and the incompetent, and the Army has both aplenty.

>>Maslyakov

Sidebar: The Balance of Powers

The UGB-affiliated political officers integrated in the Army represent just one of the numerous examples of different Russian state agencies double-checking each other, forming a complexly balanced web of checks and balances as a result despite the utter legal dominance of the executive branch in the Constitution. The UGB has its Department M specifically to monitor the MVD activities; the Investigative Committee not only handles the high-profile crimes, but also monitors the other law enforcers for corruption; the Public Prosecution Office has to sign on every criminal case before criminal proceedings are even initiated; all of these also have Internal Security to control their own employees - a system purposefully designed to be bloated and cumbersome, but controllable and internally consistent.

>> What it means for a runner, though, is that even when you suspect your Johnson to be a police general and he promises you full legal immunity, don't let your guard down - there are boys out there in the UGB and the Prosecution Office who'll bring him down just as eagerly as they will you.

>> Thorn

GAPSI

The GAPSI (Gosudarstvennoe Agentstvo po Sboru Informatsii, State Agency for Information Gathering) is the UGB detachment for handling Matrix security. While other teams like the Zanaves or the Sector K secure public backbone lines and handle criminal infringements, the GAPSI is more concerned with counterintelligence work, data mining (supposedly in search for anti-state plots), maintaining the government's own top-secret Matrix landlines, and foreign intelligence (although, of course, your UGB officials are going to deny that last one). Unlike the free-riding cowboys of the Sector K, the GAPSI matrix operatives are strictly limited in their actions, only acting on direct command and even then frequently overwatched by a handler. They get to work against a wider array of interesting targets, however, and get the best training available in the country, often with the security system developers themselves forced into cooperating with them.

Thanks to the secrecy involved, rumours abound on which of the recent hacks can be attributed to the GAPSI, and the role the detachment played in orchestrating some of the recent Matrix virus outbreaks. No solid clues point at the GAPSI, however.

>> The GAPSI is the main Russian source for prime runner hackers, and always will be. No pro can tolerate civvies watching over his every action for long.

>>Dead Deckers Society

>> *No part of the UGB just lets its operatives walk away just like that, of course.*

>>Novichok



Sidebar: Nanites in the Army

Nanites so far have failed to revolutionise warfare as the advertisement prospects promised. While some of the nanite models are highly effective at some of the tasks usually associated with the army, their cost-to-effectiveness when used in large scale is still lower than that of more conventional tools, making nanite-based systems far more common among spec-ops teams or during surprise strikes.

UGB Spetsnaz

The UGB, being a massive structure that it is, commands several Spetsnaz detachments. Those are uniformly highly trained, equipped without taking costs into account, and fiercely loyal to their own perceived version of the good for the Motherland.

The most well-known is the counter-terrorist team Alpha. This relatively numerous regiment is famous for its direct-assault attacks, and the operatives capable not only of staying alive during

those, but saving the majority of the hostages. There's a rumour in the Moscow's underworld that the particularly greedy runners, or the ones falling into UGB hands involuntarily, can end up on the Alpha's training compound, playing as the opfor. Supposedly, non-lethal ammunition is used during those exercises, but then there's a suspiciously low number of runners claiming to have participated.

>> *They pay well, though.*

>>Arctic Wolf

>> *You write that as if you know first-hand.*

>>Novichok

>> *... but not for talking too much.*

>>Arctic Wolf

Alpha's sister team is Vympel, a unit tasked with protection of the country's strategic installations. The necessity of life training means Vympel operatives are also trained in sabotage tactics, including some of the most underhanded tricks in the terrorists' arsenals.

The most mysterious of the UGB-affiliated teams is the GSO (Gosudarstvennaya Sluzhba Ohrany, State Security Service), the regiment that handles the security for the Russian top officials. While the conscripted part of their personnel are just adequately prepared soldiers, mostly used for guard duty and chosen for looks as much as for combat potential, the officer corps is a riddle. First, they are all baseline humans, without exception. Second, they sport no visible implants, aren't Awakened as far as any Awakened observer has seen, and generally appear to be absolutely ordinary, except maybe for their auras being a little bit bland, and their faces being nondescript to the point of unmemorable. What the trick is, nobody is completely sure.

>> *Easy. They're all dragons in human form, using their dragonic magic to hide their real essence.*

>>Truth

>> *Using discrete bioware or masking their auras would work just as well.*

>>Gemini

>> *Both of those would be possible to notice for an experienced assenser, and I'm almost positive Russia doesn't have enough high-grade initiates to fill the ranks of the GSO.*

>>Ethernaut

>> *Remember those Department Y dealings with the Winternight cult, back before the Crush? I have it from a trustworthy source that those involved the Winternight sending the UGB a boat full of prisoners the cult had been keeping in their Swedish headquarters. No way to know now where those came from, so you could as well presume the GSO are all high-class rogue*

Winternight undercover operatives.

>>Plan 9

>> ... *Do I even need to comment on that?*

>>Skeptic

There is also a multitude of lesser regiments, each handling its own very specific task. An example would be the Feldjagerskaya Sluzhba (Feldjager Service), which is a team of governmental couriers tasked with handling the most sensitive messages and packages. Since they often have to deliver messages that should under no circumstances fall into the wrong hands by common passenger planes, the jagers are universally, if grudgingly, admitted to be the best hand-to-hand fighters among the Russian Spetsnaz teams. They have a yet-unbroken streak of victories in the melee championships of the Spetsnaz yearly tournaments to prove that, something many other regiments would pay dearly to break.

Other Spetsnaz teams

Perhaps the most widely known not only inside the Armed Forces structure, but among the general populace and abroad are the Spetsnaz teams Peresvet and Oslyabya. Those two organisations represent the militant part of the Russian Orthodox Church, Oslyabya team specialising in occult research and mostly consisting of Orthodox magicians, and Peresvet mostly concerned with security and protection of the Church's holdings (including protecting Oslyabya team members on their constant expeditions and relic hunts).

>> *Drek, what is this, a kung-fu flick? Mysterious militant monk orders, holding the sacred secrets of hand-to-hand combat?*

>>Trooper

>> *You know, it does not look nearly as funny when robed figures saw your limbs off, all the while assuring you that it's for your own good. Thought I was a goner for sure; and those creeps got the Sword of Saint Peter.*

>>Babinicz

>> *So, you are the one to thank for that.*

>>Battle Pole

>> *Okay, so, the Russians have the original Sword of Stalingrad, the Sword of Saint Boris, the Sword of Saint Peter, and the rumour has it they got their hands on the Reichsschwert during the first Euro-War. Anyone else sees a pattern here?*

>>Jones

>> *You know, between that, the Szczerbiec missing from the Wawel Castle's treasury and the rumours about the Grunwald Swords rediscovered resurfacing regularly, you might just be on to*

something.

>>Novichok

>>*Right, and mullah Sayid Jazrir claimed to own Zulfiqar; but it was never recovered after his assassination and the splintering of Alliance of Allah.*

>>Maharib

>> *Whatever the reason the russkies have stolen those swords for, they're going to be very sorry they did.*

>>Battle Pole

>> *Hm, I wonder if those weird robed Johnsons paying good nuyen to any smuggler with a sub for giving them a ride along the coast of Japan late last year were in any way linked to this. Could they have been looking for the sunken Kusanagi?*

>>Tadpole

>> *They actually contract out much more than that. If you have a reputation for being discreet and get on their good side supporting Oslyabya "requisition" teams, they might hire you to hunt for Christian relics independently. Anything goes, but mostly old icons and bodily remains of the saints.*

>>OnCall

Other than that, pretty much every Russian ministry has their own armed teams.

Less legendary than the monks, but still widely known among the population are exterminator teams of the Ministry of Health and Social Development. Dealing with everyday threats ranging from demon rats to HMHVV infections to insect spirits, exterminators value precision, swiftness and flamethrowers above all. Their numbers, however, are insufficient, which makes them frequent clients of militant shadowrunners.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is rumoured to have acquisition and protection teams, but those rumours appear to be unfounded, seeing how the GRU and the UGB have intelligence work covered.

The Ministry of Law has their team Vesly (Scales) with a higher than normal percentage of magicians on a payroll, mostly dealing with tracking offenders evading the justice, and capturing escaped convicts. A few deaths among the more ambitious city gang members are attributed to their ritual casters, and Vesly are quite infamous among the prison population for the brutality shown during rioting prison assaults in 2029, 2052 and 2064.

Surprisingly enough, among the better-known teams is the Ministry of Education's Mentor. The reason for its existence is that the Ministry handles the education of the Awakened as well, naturally, and thus Mentor gets to deal with the magical threats, of which foremost are toxic magicians. Their telling feature is supporting their own magicians (primarily hermetics and Orthodoxes) with naturally magic-resistant operatives, whom they make a point of hiring at the first chance.

Playing on the reputation of the UGB Alpha team is the Ministry of Emergency Situations team

Gamma. Gamma is concerned with defending objects of strategic importance throughout Russia, and they are quite proud of their electronics specialists, riggers and defensive lines architects.

The Ministry of Communications' team Zanaves (Curtain) deals with Matrix crime, operating shoulder to shoulder with UGB's GAPSI and MVD's Sector K, as well as S&K and Evo specialists. While the aforementioned teams mostly deal with direct infringements, Zanaves normally busies itself with protecting Russian backbone lines and civilian comsat constellations. A number of other ministries and departments are rumoured to have their own armed men, but those must be mostly small rapid-response teams of up to half a hundred men.

>> Among which Novichok doesn't mention the GSKN - the state anti-drug thugs, known for their murderous brutality, interrogative torture usage and blatant clue planting.

>>NaSisteme

>> You know, NaSisteme, minding that Sistema is a century-old slang word for the junkie community, somehow I doubt that your description is unbiased.

>>Kosyak

Awakened Yakut: The wrath of Gaia

>> Okay, let's move on from the Russians to their opponents in the conflict brewing – the Yakut. The business is slow there, so it wasn't an easy task to find a knowledgeable source; but with a little help from my contacts, I've been able to acquire the help of a native runner turned merc, Batyr.

>>Tenchi

>> Hello, kids. Now, a fair word of warning – I've served in the Awakened Militia, and had a notable rank, enough to be in the know on the goings in the army then. Yet, it's been a couple of years since I left, and while I still have my sources, my info may not be entirely precise or up to date.

>>Batyr

Just as the rest of the Awakened Yakut, the Awakened Militia is a monolithic entity on paper only. While protecting the country and the land is every citizen's sacred obligation written in the Constitution, the precise ways they do that are as diverse as the country's inhabitants.



The most numerous and most conventional force is formed by the Metahuman Zone inhabitants. Those dwellers of the relatively urbanised areas are mostly drafted into the twelve conscription-based frontline regiments. These are the closest Yakut has to a conventionally organised fighting force – they get modern-day, if not SOTA, equipment, and include armour and strike aviation battalions. The regiments' small size allows the government to keep their equipment relatively up to date even with the limited resources it has at hand.

>> While the equipment the standing frontline forces is indeed up to date, - mostly Amazonian hardware, - should a full-scale war start and reservists be called to supplement the standing army, they're getting the hardware from the warehouses, - which is ninety percent captured Russian weaponry from the time of the Independence War.

>>Superintendent

>> The Yakut forces are guaranteed to fight at a numeric disadvantage against the Russian invaders, especially in what comes to modern combat vehicles. Because of that, they have to rely on their superiority in combat magic. A single possession-tradition spirit can turn an outdated tin can into a death machine - and if you consider it can capture enemy equipment, the possibilities become endless!

>>Vorozheya

The frontline regiments, despite the harsh discipline enforced, are known for their low morale, since the Metahuman Zone inhabitants are embittered by the poverty of their native region they blame on the current government. The training could also be better, but with the limited

resources Yakut possesses, the exercises rarely use live ammo.

>> *Don't you just love how the Yakut go on and on about their "limited resources"? Siberia is one of the most mineral-rich regions of the world, yet they prefer to moan and whine instead of using what they have.*

>>Kosyak

>> *We're not robbing Mother Gaia, whatever our noble goals may be.*

>>Batyr

The other major line of conscript education is guerrilla and sabotage warfare. A lot of attention is paid to it, with the army receiving extensive training, and the government arranging weapon and equipment caches for when the worst comes to worst. Even the frontline regiment conscripts receive half a year of training in the area, while some third of the conscripts from the Metahuman Zone receive extensive two-year training, learning to work in small pre-arranged cells. Thanks to that work, Awakened Yakut has several large saboteur and guerrilla training centres, which it uses to further the goals of Mother Gaia around the globe.

>> *Read: to train green activists, from "moderate" fighting cells to deep-green direct-action madmen. Preference is given to anti-Russian groups, naturally.*

>>Novichok



>> *Can you blame them? Someone has to do something, someone has to bring the fight to the corrupt governments and self-important megacorps!*

>>Green Ring

>> *Did I say anything about blaming? It just seems to me that some green activists are more dangerous for everyone than the others – and the Yakut do not act like they understand the difference.*

>>Novichok

Another major component of the Yakut forces is the tribal militia of the Preserve. While de jure a part of the Awakened Militia, the tribal militias function quite differently from the conscript regiments of the Metahuman Zone. Each tribe goes to war separately, almost to a man, forming an independent military unit under command of either its peacetime leaders or a specially chosen war chief. A complex net of agreements and alliances painfully forged by Vernya and her shapeshifter worshippers binds the tribal militias together and to the state. Thanks to those ties, the tribes supplement each other, since each of them is restrictedly specialised both in the ways it wages

war and the resources it possesses. While the tribes train their warriors, the harsh conditions they have to survive without the aid of the modern tech dictate the low priority they assign to that task, so the greatest strength the militias have is their sturdiness and the familiarity they have with their land.

>> *The tribal militias are also supplemented with quite a number of domesticated paranormal critters normally used in economy and housekeeping, from hellhounds and siberian firebirds to mammoths. Ensuring the diversity of such support is one of the main reasons the government puts so much work into maintaining the tribal alliances.*

>>Bearyuk

>> *You have to give the tribes their due, though - they have a lot of lifelong hunters, and I've never met better shots. They're spec-ops level.*

>>Kosyak



The shapeshifters take their part in the army life, despite normally not numbering in the ranks of the regiments of the Awakened Militia and having a lot of freedom on where to put their skills to use. For instance, bird shifters provide the Militia with reliable recon, and great cat shifters make for great one-man sabotage teams.

>> *The great cat shifters, be they tigers or leopards, are still treated with suspicion in Awakened*

Yakut, since the majority of their parent species' populations dwell on Russian territory.
>>Novichok

Bear shifters are known for their exceptional skill when they take command of regular regiments: in fact, the Awakened Militia is headed by a bear shapeshifter, Ulric Bezyzvestnykh, who has risen to the very top from the rank-and-file frontline positions throughout the thirty years of independence war. Wolf shifters have their own hierarchy, as is their nature, running parallel to the command chain: they're great small group tacticians and fighters, able to raid behind the enemy lines for months.

>>Competition in the wolf shifter hierarchy, especially when it comes to the top spot, can be extremely cutthroat. No shifter would hire runners to get him the top spot on a silver platter, of course, but info gathering and even subtle poisoning are fair game.
>>Watcher from the White Rocks

Thanks to large numbers of the shifters possessing spellcasting ability, communication is much less of an issue for the Militia, and informal structures formed of shapeshifters handle both the intelligence and counterintelligence of the army. Rumours persist of the deep-cover multi-shifter agents only answering to Vernya herself, dispersed both throughout the Awakened Militia and the Russian Forces stationed along the borders of Yakut.

>> Please, the readers tired of that rumour of "multi-shifters", raise your hands.
>>Gemini

>> In the Sixth World, not all of the rumours are just that.
>>Ethernaut



Awakened Yakut also has a disproportionately numerous naval force, largely composed of refitted ships sold by ex-superpowers in the wake of the Cold War and the Great Ghost Dance War, most of which have changed more than a dozen hands, both governmental, corporate and private. The fleet's flagship is the battlecruiser "Chorsun", which used to be a part of the Russian Pacific Fleet under the name "Admiral Gorchakov", and defected to Yakut side during the Independence War with its rebellious crew. The Pacific Fleet is still extremely bitter about that, and heightened security is maintained around the vessel at all times after several attempted saboteur attacks. Four cruisers with varied countries of origin and years of production form the backbone of the fleet with "Chorsun": "Kytaanah", "Balamat", "Erelleeh" and "Harsa Suoh". Those are supplemented with over a dozen amphibious assault vessels, which, despite bearing lighter armament than attack ships, still come with their own air wings and anti-ship missiles. Finally, a small fleet of medium and light conventional-powered subs forms the underwater component of the naval force.

>> The Russians would really pay dearly to see "Chorsun" on the seabed, and with their own frogmen incapable of getting to the ship, they're looking for external talent for the mission. It's not nearly going to be a cakewalk, though, the Yakut are pretty serious about guarding their flagship.

>>Trooper

>> *When Batyr says the cruisers in the fleet are “of varied models and countries of origin”, he’s complimenting the junk those vessels really are. Hell, “Harsa Suoh” is over seventy years old!*

>>Fleety Fred

>> *It just recently got an upgrade, though, so while its propulsion and armouring are sub-par, the electronics and weaponry on board are up to the task of wrecking some chaos among the Russian Pacific.*

>>Bearyuk

>> *As a matter of fact, the newest ships in Yakut arsenal are the coast guard vessels. With the kind of demand the Yakut have for alcohol and sugar, smuggling would be flourishing if not for the tight lid the government is putting on it. And those frigates are fully capable of full-scale military action, too.*

>>Fleety Fred

>> *Batyr also forgot or didn’t want to mention the forces the Yakut Navy has in the Arctic. The coast guards are supported by three destroyers based in Dikson and Tiksi, no less. So smugglers beware.*

>>Rising Son

>> *Actually, come to think of it, why do the Yakut need all those amphibious assault vessels? It’s not like they have any overseas interests...*

>>METAlhead

>> *That one’s simple: Kamchatka Island. It’s been disputed territory between Russia and Yakut for ages, and factually, neither of the countries have established firm control of the magic sites there. While landing from the Transpolar Aleut territory is possible over the narrow channel and not high seas, traversing the swampy and mountainous terrain of the island from there is hardly an optimal strategy – and one that’d require a lot of diplomatic work with the NAN, too.*

>>Fleety Fred

Just like in the Militia, the shifters in the Navy form a privileged non-formally organised fighting force. Seal shifters are especially common there, and their natural talents make them perfect fleet scouts and sabotage specialists, with the government providing the specialised equipment needed for them to reach peak effectiveness.

>> *Okay, that army stuff is all fun and good, but what about law enforcement? Why isn’t it mentioned?*

>>Kosyak

>> *Because the Awakened Yakut does not have law enforcement in the conventional meaning of the word. The tribes of the Preserve police themselves, being small enough for everyone to know everything about everyone. Tribal chiefs or shamans dispense justice there. In the*

Metahuman Zone, though, law is enforced by shapeshifters, which makes for a spectacularly low crime rate – after all, if any bird on the street could be a cop, wouldn't you think twice before committing a crime? For the ones without such foresight, though, the government has enough mind-readers to solve crimes and find the guilty reliably.

>>Batyr

>> *It's also worth noting that those same shifters act as counter-intelligence and counter-insurgency forces. Some of the stories I heard about their work involve executing dissidents without formal court only for a shifter to take his place as an agent provocateur.*

>>Red Anya

>> *Bullshit.*

>>Batyr.



Larry MacDougall

Gypsy Shaman

Sagan Zaba: The White Rock

Remarkably little solid is known about the particulars of the Sagan Zaba rebellion, and so far no insider has been willing to comment. What we know for a fact, though, is that the rebellion is centred around the Olkhon Island of the Lake Baikal, the White Rock, where the rebels have allegedly found some powerful magical artefacts that allow them to remain steadfastly independent both from the technologic Russians to the South and the Awakened Yakut to the North. Theories abound as to what the artefacts might be, but so far no significant clues have

emerged to support any opinion. There are even voices that there are no artefacts at all, just an important convergence of ley lines that has allowed the rebels to turn the island into a magical power site. This theory is supported by the fact that in the territory controlled by the rebels the mana flow obviously favours their magic traditions.

So let's stick to what we actually know, such as the build-up of the rebel forces. These are comprised of ethnic Evenks, Evens, Buryats, and a handful Russians here and there. Other nationalities of Awakened Yakut are underrepresented, which fuels ethnic tensions against the listed groups in Yakut proper. While the rebels wield powerful magic, they are obviously against Awakened beings enslaving the metahumanity, - that is, after all, their core idea that led them to rebellion. This makes them extremely cautious of shapeshifters, wild spirits, and often even the Infected.

The area around Baikal controlled by the rebels is relatively densely settled and highly developed, which allows the rebellion to support a large standing army plus enough stores to arm most of the half a dozen millions of metahumans living under its control, which discourages any thought of direct military action against the rebellion, whether from the North or from the South.

>> That doesn't mean that Awakened Yakut, Russia and Sagan Zaba haven't been playing a game of escalation, using false flag attacks, sabotage, and massive propaganda campaigns.

>> Kosyak

The rebel army is relatively well supplied: while its aviation barely numbers a dozen of medium copters, its forces are well supplied with light armour, if slightly outdated, personnel firearms, including heavier ones, and light field artillery. Thanks to fighting in the same region for more than a dozen years, the rebels have entrenched well, building strong encampments throughout their zone of control. Olkhon Island is especially well-protected from any kind of threat, and the Buryatian Buddhist monasteries serve as regional strongholds. There is no commonly accepted opinion as to where the weapons and the fortification materials are coming from: the most popular versions include Manchuria and the Russian alphabet agencies.

The Sagan Zaba magic is a weird mix of shamanism and geomancy, heavy on mysticism, and it's overwhelmingly based on calling upon the powers of ice and snow. This has given rise to the rumours that the rebellion is in fact headed by Yamal Iri, a legendary spirit of frost, and is thus just a front for a primordial spirit civil war.

>> This is ridiculous. This movement is about the right to self-determination and responsible usage of modern technologies instead of blindly turning away from them. There is no stupid secret inferior motive.

>> Watcher from the White Rocks

>> Now tell me, comrade, how long have you been with the rebellion? Have you seen the top brass? In my five years, I've received many orders, including blatantly suicidal, and I've never seen the people they're coming from.

>> Empty Nothing

Local combatants

Statblocks

Russian Army soldier

Conscripted, undertrained, and handling most of the day-to-day fighting, soldiers of the Red Army rely on technological and numerical superiority to defeat the Yakut.

VDV soldier

Used as assault drop troops or simply as elite mechanised infantry, most VDV soldiers are orks or trolls. After their conscription term, most paratroopers handle security in Russian companies, and can be useful as such.

Red Navy Combat Frogman

The Red Navy employs combat frogmen both to sabotage enemy vessels and to protect its own.

GRU lone wolf agent

Living double and triple lives in deep cover, GRU lone wolf agents are utterly devoted to their country. Most seek work that puts them into the middle of information networks, so it can happen that runners work unknowingly for a GRU-affiliated fixer or Johnson.

MVD patrolman

MVD goons are little better than the gangers they're supposed to protect against, but they get sweeter gear. It's relatively simple to find understanding with them as long as you have something on your credstick, and aren't doing anything to bring the attention from on high upon the patrolmen.

Sector K operative

The Sector K holds the hottest Matrix cowboys the MVD can get its mitts on. Less strictly controlled than the GAPSI employees and given wide legal authority, Sector K are the golden boys of the Russian Matrix law enforcement.

OMON operator

Russian OMON officers handle any serious crises, be it popular riots, organised criminal elements overstepping their bounds, or hostage takings. Befriending one can bring a wealth of info on the city's hot zones.

Politrुक

The UGB shadow behind every Red Army commander's shoulder, politruks ensure loyalty as well as serving as the primary counterintelligence barrier. Often accomplished psychologists, politruks can gain from working with the runners more than the runners themselves.

Alpha operative

Rarely seen and never revealing their faces, Alpha operatives are the elite UGB counter-terrorist teams. Their secluded lives are spent in combat training, and runners are only likely to encounter them as opposition.

Yakutian soldier

Yakutians count on stealth, cunning, and magic to defeat the invading despoilers. Their rank and file soldiers are underequipped, but never lacking in combat spirit or resilience.

Yakutian Preserve shaman

Shamans are always immensely influential in the tribes of Preserve, on the equal footing if not surpassing the tribal chiefs. Fighting a full-scale war, however, puts immense strain upon them, forcing a few to turn to the less savoury magical practices.

Yakutian animal handler

Yakutians are famous for coexisting peacefully and respectfully with the natural world, and their animal handlers are the embodiment of this principle - not forcing their charges into obedience, but achieving willing cooperation.

Yakutian wolf shapeshifter

Wolf shapeshifters form their own hierarchy a step aside from the mainstay Awakened Militia. They're mostly used for recon, deep infiltration, and sabotage.

Yakutian seal shapeshifter

Seal shapeshifters are used in Awakened Yakut as combat divers. Compared to metahumans, however, they have a disadvantage in what comes both to diving time and maximum depth.

Yakutian bear shapeshifter

Bear shapeshifters make surprisingly good army commanders, ever-mindful of their troops, but willing to go to the bitter end. They are also a mighty threat on their own, even without weapons.

Anatoly "Kosyak" Kosin - human commander

An orphan brought up in the Ministry of Defense orphanage, Kosyak has a strong sense of personal honour, duty, and patriotism. Graduating Suvorov Military School made him a fine junior officer, but did not prepare him for the apathy and chaos reigning in most army regiments. After serving his mandatory term, Kosyak stroke out on his own as a shadowrunner.

Stepan Mogila - ork machine gunner, Orthodox Christian, visible tattoos.

Brought up among the besieged fortress atmosphere of Irkutsk, Stepan Mogila learned to hate the Yakutians early. His term as a machine gunner in Kosyak's recon squad let him dish out some of this hatred, but it's hardly finding any application on the streets of Moscow now that he's out of the Army.

Yuri "Virus" Karabash - human marksman and hacker

One of the brighter hacking students in his Bauman University group, Yuri Karabash was expelled after being caught playing pranks on the dean. He found protection from hazing in Stepan Mogila, and stayed a tech specialist in Kosyak's recon squad. After discharge, he shares his time between hacking for cold hard cash and playing elaborate pranks on everyone he can reach.

Arslang "Rusyi" Basangov - elf medic and magician, buddhist

Born in the steppes of Kalmykia, Arslang Basangov was on a fast track to a happy life courting a local bigwig's daughter. A bandit raid from Turkestan left his bride dead and his life in shambles, forcing him to turn to buddhist mysticism. Surprisingly, that also brought out his latent weak magical talent, which saved Kosyak's squad numerous times during their service together.

Shono - newbie Yakutian wolf shapeshifter adept

Sent by his father to fulfil the terms of alliance with the wider Awakened Yakut, Shono's a capable if overconfident young combat adept. Brought up in a wolf pack, the shifter is oblivious on metahuman customs and tech, and unwilling to learn these inferior ways.

Etty - Yakutian tiger magician, spec ops operative

Etty is a rare breed, a tiger shapeshifter born to one of the handful remaining Yakutian pairs. Powerful magician steeped in the secrets of Yakut magic in the Militia service, he is a capable spec-ops operative, able to handle himself both in direct combat and covert operations.