

3. ARMED FORCES, MILITRY TECHNOLOGY

ROSGVARD, THE NATIONAL GUARDS RUSSIAN FEDERATION

GRZEGORZ ROŚLAN

ABSTRACT

In the article, the author describes the National Guard of the Russian Federation as a new formation formed recently in connection with the changes of the Russian uniformed services. The aim of the article is to familiarize readers with the purpose, mission and tasks of the new formation. The author emphasizes that federal services, including the National Guard, operate independently of the Russian armed forces and are directly controlled by the president of the Russian Federation as internal forces. Now the National Guard is becoming the core element of such forces. The new formation has taking over the part of the tasks of internal forces, including part of mission of the special police departments, for instance OMON. The director of the new Federal Service is also the commander of the National Guard. This means that the current changes are creating a coherent internal security system, based on an alternative internal army. The author describes the results of his literature research and open sources on the subject.

KEY WORDS

Russian Federation, national guard, internal security system, internal forces.

DOI: 10.26410/SF_2/17/8

GRZEGORZ ROŚLAN¹

Rzeszów University of Technology,
Department of Management
Department of Safety Science,
Poland

¹ Grzegorz Roslan assistant Professor of Department of Security Science, Faculty of Management, Rzeszów University of Technology. In the years 2016-2017 the Vice-Rector for Education and Student Affairs of the Air Force Officer School in Dęblin.

Russia can be either an empire or a democracy, but it cannot be both.

Zbigniew Brzeziński

27th March 2017 at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated the military servant of The National Guard of the Russian Federation on their feast day. This event is a great opportunity to bring closer to the issue of this new Russian security environment for formation. Familiarizing the reader with the destiny and tasks of this formation is the primary purpose of the author. This issue is

important even for the recent events in the metro in St. Petersburg¹.

Introduction

On 5th April 2016, Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin signed the De-

¹ On April 3, 2017 around 14:40 Moscow time there was a blast of unidentified equipment in the subway tunnel in St. Petersburg between the stations Technical Institute and Siennaja Platon. According to the Tass agency, citing sources in the police, fourteen people were killed and about fifty injured.

cree No. 159², underlying the largest reorganization of local power structures since 2003 (the restructuring of the institution of internal security institutions), related to the establishment of a new, powerful formation – The National Guard of the Russian Federation³ – Rosgvard. The changes initiated by the presidential decree had an immediate legal effect and significantly changed the distribution of power and competence between the ministries responsible for internal security of the Russian Federation. The RF National Guard is a formation whose official name is the Ministry: The Federal Service of the Guards of the National Guard (FSVNG RF)⁴. It operates independently of the Russian Armed Forces and is directly controlled by the Russian president⁵. Its hitherto internal armies have become the core of The Ministry of Internal Affairs RF (MVD RF)⁶. The new formation consolidated itself while taking over the tasks of internal troops mentioned, special police departments such as OMON⁷ and SOBR⁸, and the director of the new Federal Service was also the chief commander of the Guard⁹.

The current change does not simply mean the formation of one more militarized formation, but the creation of a coherent internal security system, based on an alternative army. It is worth pointing out that the decision to set up the Guard is part of the long tradition of Russian public security services, such as *oprichnina*¹⁰ tsar Ivan the Terrible or *Protector Romanov*.

Story of history

Currently in Russia the year of operation of the new National Guard Guards is celebrated, whose feast was set on January 16, 2017 and will be held every March 27, National Defense Day. The Contemporary Guard combines the long history of public security services in Russia and the date of 27 March is the day on which the tsar's decree was created in 1811, the Corps of Inner Guard.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the first attempts to form a formation aimed at suppressing any internal opposition took place in Russia in the mid-16th century. Oprichnina¹¹ is a term in the history of Russia (1565-1572) and at the same time the policy applied at that time by tsar Ivan IV the Terrible. The main objective of the oprichnina was to suppress all internal opposition and to consolidate the tsarist power. It involved the separation of much of the Muscovite state from the power of boyars¹² (the rest of them are called the earth) and subjected it to the direct authority of the tsar and the terror of his guards called oprichniki.

² <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201604050053>, (access 04.07.2016).

³ National Guard of the Russian Federation (ros. Национальная Гвардия Российской Федерации), in Russian, the abbreviated form is less commonly used Rosgvardiya (Rus.: Росгвардия, literally: Russian guard).

⁴ In the official Russian documents you can find a shortcut FSVNG RF (rus. ФСВНГ РФ).

⁵ 21-я бригада оперативного назначения войск национальной гвардии России награждена орденом Жукова. Rosgvard.ru (po rosyjsku). Russia. Interim Information Center of the Russian Federation FSVNG, (access: 25.05.2016).

⁶ Internal Army of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Russian Federation (MVD RF) (rus. Внутренние войска Министерства внутренних дел РФ).

⁷ OMON – Special Purpose Mobile Division (rus. ОМОН-Отряд Мобильный Особого Назначения).

⁸ SOBR – Special Rapid Response Unit (rus. Специальные Отряды Быстрого Реагирования).

⁹ National Guard to obtain a license for peacekeeping operations abroad, <https://www.rt.com>, (access 13.04.2016).

¹⁰ oprichnina (rus. Опричнина) – define the period in the history of Russia (1565-1572) and at the same time the policy applied at that time by Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible. The word comes from the Russian word oprich - besides, separately.

¹¹ Wielki słownik ortograficzny PWN z zasadami pisowni i interpunkcji, E. Polański (Ed.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2016, p. 812.

¹² Bojarzy (from Bulgarian: boliare, boliarin) - the collective name of the representatives of the ruling class in Kievan Rus, occupying the second, after the princes, the dominant position in the government.

Besides intimidation of the population, the main objective of oprichnina was the pacification of higher social classes, potentially disloyal to the tsar. The oprichniki were involved, among others, in the murder of uncomfortable adversaries. One of the tasks of oprichniki was also to carry out mass deportations. The feat of oprichnina, well-known at that time, was the destruction of the rebellious Novgorod the Great, whose nationals posed a grave threat to authoritarian tyrannical authority, both politically and ideologically. Opium mainly came from lower social strata or were foreign mercenaries. Their tasks included sowing terror and managing the land taken over by boyars¹³.

Bearing in mind the issues raised regarding the formation of the internal security of Russia, it is also worth mentioning the Ochrание Romanow, the Department of Public Security and Public Safety. The guard was created after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, by the order of Alexander III of August 14, 1881. The main task was guarding the opponents of power and the infiltration of opposition circles, while its speciality was to organize all kinds of provocation¹⁴.

The guard had his own ciphers and communication system, independent of the then Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military command. It was structurally subordinate to the Department of Special Affairs (Osobyj Otdiel) established in 1898, Director of the Department of Police, acting within the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Ochrana had a large group of officers and paid agents¹⁵.

The guard hired a relatively small team of full-time officers, but enjoyed extensive network of secret agents (about 300,000) in 1915. An important stage in the creation and functioning of the internal security formation of Russia and its leaders was the years of the existence of the Soviet Union. In common sense, the name of all repressions related to tracking down opponents of the Soviet power of that period became the name of the NKVD¹⁶.

In the years leading up to the October Revolution of 1917, Vladimir Lenin and his closest associates did not see the need to establish security and intelligence services, bearing in mind the imminent arrival of a world revolution that would bring an end to the capitalist system. However, subsequent events forced the successive leaders of the Bolshevik state to verify their views. The People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR, or NKVD, inherited the traditions of such organs as the Cheka, the GPU and the OGPU guarded internal security for years, and became the cornerstone of the new Soviet-State Security Committee (KGB)¹⁷. The KGB, as the Soviet security guard, used surveillance of the population, the fight against real and alleged opponents of the state and its leaders, and, among others, fighting independent information flow, in propaganda often referred to as the *shield and sword of the Party*.

In November 1991, after the Jananav coup¹⁸, the KGB was liquidated, and by the decree of President Boris Yeltsin of December 19, 1991, the Ministry of Security of the Russian Federation was established. Thus,

¹³ Cf.: M. Heller, *Historia imperium rosyjskiego*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 2005; R. Skrynnikow, *Iwan Groźny*, Seria: Biografie Sławnych Ludzi, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1979.

¹⁴ A. Andrusiewicz, *Carowie i cesarze Rosji*, Warszawa 2001, p. 366.

¹⁵ Cf.: J. Kossecki, *Tajniki sterowania ludźmi*, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1984.

¹⁶ NKVD USSR – (ros. НКВД СССР), People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs USSR (Ros. Народный комиссариат внутренних дел СССР).

¹⁷ KGB ZSRR – State Security Committee at the Council of Ministers USSR – (Ros. Комитет государственной безопасности – КГБ СССР).

¹⁸ Janajev's Prison or Muscovy Prison, August's Prison is an unsuccessful attempt to seize power in the USSR by hard-headed CPSU leaders in August 1991.

the KGB was divided into several parts, which was to be punishable by a special punishment for the support of the Soviet service for the Jananav coup. An important stage in the formation of the formation responsible for Russia's security was the Act of 3 April 1995 on the bodies of the Federal Security Service in the Russian Federation, the Federal Security Service (FSB)¹⁹.

It is worth emphasizing that the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin was a KGB officer between 1975-1990 (photo 1), and in 1998-1999 he was the head of the FSB.

Figure 1. Vladimir Putin in uniform of a KGB officer



Source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/W%C5%82adimir_Putin.

The National Guard enters the game

Plans to create a national guard directly subordinated to the President of the Russian Federation were launched as early as April 2012²⁰. Initially, this formation, now called the National Guard, was supposed to be created to safeguard constitutional order, and its potential was primarily the

strength and resources of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs RF²¹. The decision to create the Guards caused confusion on the Russian scene responsible for internal security of Russia. This is due to the acquisition of a number of tasks and functions that the Ministry of Internal Affairs managed to implement by Vladimir Kolokolcev. This, in turn, could mean a crisis of Kremlin trust in the current leadership in the so-called *power unit*. The changes are also a consequence of the long-standing rivalry between heads of individual services for heads of state and the control zones of social and economic life of Russian citizens. On the other hand, the subordination of the Internal Army, so far existing within the Ministry of Interior, the newly created formation creates an internal army, i.e. a force of about 400 thousand. This also means that Vladimir Putin gives more confidence to the new Guard Guards than to the former Ministry of Interior, where the Russian Forces functioned. Moreover, it can be concluded that the current model of the functioning of the Internal Army was not effective. In addition, the evolution of views on how to use the newly created National Guard is reflected in the scenarios of the recent exercises of the Internal Forces of the Ministry of Interior. They assumed support for operational troops, including, above all, participation in combat in urban areas and the suppression of public protests. It is worth emphasizing that the current capacity of the National Guard and its direct tasks related to law enforcement significantly undermines the position of the current head of the Interior Ministry, depriving him, among others, of Control over special police departments.

At the same time, the Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) and the Federal Migration Service (FSM) were dissolved, and their existing structures became specialized units of the Ministry of Foreign Af-

¹⁹ Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB, Rus. Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации, ФСБ).

²⁰ J. Latynina, Private Putin National Guard, The Moscow Times (April 4, 2012), (access: 13.06.2016).

²¹ Ibidem.

fairs²². However, this does not compensate the Internal Affairs Minister of the RF for the benefit of FSVNG RF chief. These changes are also a consequence of the current economic crisis in Russia, which forces, implying a reduction in bureaucracy, staff reductions also in power ministries.

Work in the area of the newly formed National Guard of the Russian Federation in the first days of its operation focused on drafting a whole range of normative-legal acts. They defined the areas of functioning of the Internal Forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and assured the Russian authorities of the Kremlin's complete subordination to the Russian leadership.

Commander-in-Chief²³ of the Russian National Guard, general Viktor Zolotov announced in mid-2016 that the rapid transformation of internal troops and the creation of *Rosgvard* structures focused on five working groups:

- Law enforcement, public security, construction, development and planning of military use;
- Organizational tasks and personnel security;
- Normative-legal;
- Logistic security;
- Financial security²⁴.

The transformation of the Internal Army MFAs RF into the National Guard is not limited to organizational activities. This change is also accompanied by a set of legal acts designed to give very specific and far reaching powers to new power structures. Initially, the National Guard was merely in control of the arms trade and combating organized crime, extremism and terrorism in

co-operation with other services, including the FSB's Federal Security Service.

However, according to a decree drafted by President Putin, the following tasks were imposed on the National Guard:

- Participation, in cooperation with the organs of the internal services of the FR, in the protection of public order, safeguarding public security and maintaining order of state of emergency;
- Participation in the fight against terrorism and providing legal support for anti-terrorist operations;
- Fight against extremism;
- Participation in territorial defense of the Russian Federation;
- Protection of important public buildings and special loads, in accordance with decisions of the Russian Government;
- Support and assistance to Border Services of the Federal Security Service in the protection of the state border of the Russian Federation²⁵.

The rich package of laws concerning the functioning of the National Guard also defines in detail the structure, principles and scope of its activities. It also defines the issues of commanding, managing, recruiting and providing social protection to guards, and defines the way financial and logistical support is provided.

In the context of the above-mentioned tasks of the Guards it is worth emphasizing that during the Syrian conflict, the Russian authorities considered all opponents of the government of Bashar al-Assad as terrorists, thus giving a green light to the use of their guards outside Russia. There is also a great deal of doubt in the fight against extremism, as this could justify action against the political opposition or the unfriendly Kremlin. Moreover, it was proposed at the same time to reduce the age of people who may be punished for extremism from 16 to 14 years.

²² P. Żochowski, Rosja: Gwardia Narodowa, czyli armia wewnętrzna wkracza do gry, ANALIZY OSW 06.04.2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/>, (access: 13.04.2016).

²³ The official documents can also be found with the term Director.

²⁴ M. Dura, Rusza organizacja „Gwardii Putina”, <http://www.defence24.pl/360271,rusza-organizacja-gwardii-putina>, (access 19.09.2016).

²⁵ Ibidem.

In the opinion of many experts, the proposed organizational and legal changes aimed to prepare a new demilitarized formation for Russia's parliamentary elections (September 2016) and next year's presidential elections (2018). It is the National Guard under the charismatic leadership of General Viktor Zolotov to guarantee Putin that there will be no unexpected riots and protests. All the more so, that this formation aims, among others, to perform tasks related to the protection of important objects and state institutions and participate in public order protection without excluding the interruption of mass meetings held without permission.

In monitoring a new formation, commanders can create the way they develop it. According to the assumptions, potential Roswell guards are expected to come to the service or be called, without the right of refusal. In fact, the formation of the Guard itself is a function of the selection of those currently serving in the Internal Forces of

the Ministry of Interior, special police forces, such as OMON units used to suppress mass social unrest or SOBR counter-terrorism units and organized crime and the protection forces of the Ministry of Interior, providing protection not only to state institutions, but also to industrial concerns²⁶. Destination *Rosgvard* also has a sea and air component (Figure 2).

In conclusion, experts in the subject matter believe that as a result of the formation of a new formation there was a specific selection and simultaneous rotation of the staff. This, on the one hand, ensures the elitism of the individual and, on the other, the abolition of regional agreements, which in many cases have paralyzed the activities of the control bodies, while creating a strong opposition to the Kremlin authorities. Moreover, Stratfor²⁷ analysts note that the new formation was also called to protect President Putin from the coup d'état, becoming his *Pretorians*²⁸.

Figure 2. Elite soldiers 604th Special Forces Center, who after the reorganization joined the National Guard of the Russian Federation



Source: Fot. Vitaly V. Kuzmin (<http://vitalykuzmin.net/?q=node/494>) [CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons].

²⁶ Ibidem

²⁷ The US agency Stratfor publishes a five-year forecast that analyzes the international situation and draws conclusions for another decade.

²⁸ Praetorians (latin praetoriani, Praetoriae Cohortes) – praetorian cohorts, the adjutant guard of the emperors of ancient Rome. The name of the squad comes from the word praetorium, meaning the tent commander in the camp.

Management of the National Guard

The National Guard of the Russian Federation (*Rosgvard*) resembles the Russian Armed Forces in terms of structure. First and foremost, one-man and centralized command was assumed. Rosgvard's commander was a long-time trusted man of Putin's, General Viktor Zolotov. In official documents he is referred to as the head of the federal executive, has the status of minister and is directly under the President of the Russian Federation. At the same time he became a permanent member of the Security Council of the Russian Federation (Figure 3).

By appointing General Viktor Zolotov as head of the independent federal ministry, President Vladimir Putin established his strong position among the Kremlin elites. A formal proof of this position is also the appointment of Zolotov to a permanent member of the Security Council of the Russian Federation. The council, which is formed by a group of fourteen high-ranking government officials, has a real influence on the President's decisions of strategic importance²⁹.

Figure 3. The Russian National Guard is headed by Gen. Viktor Zolotov (right), a trusted Putin's man, in recent years the head of the Federal Security Service



Source: (MIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV/AP).

Viktor Zolotov is a former sparring partner of Putin and head of the Internal Forces of The Ministry of the Internal Affairs. Their acquaintance dates back to when they both worked in St. Petersburg's canon. Zolotov was then the bodyguard of Mayor Anatoly Sobczak, who was both Putin's mentor and boss. Zolotov managed the personal pro-

tection of the most important officials. He quickly became the head of Putin's protection and promoted with him. Since 1999, he commanded the protection of Prime Minister Putin, then became the head of the

²⁹ P. Żochowski, Rosja: Gwardia Narodowa, czyli armia wewnętrzna wkracza do gry, ANALIZY OSW 06.04.2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/>, [access: 13.04.2016].

Presidential Security Service, the elite unit of autonomy within the Federal Security Service.

Gen. Zolotov, at the outset of the creation of Rosgvard, announced that those who do not show proper professional attitude will be excluded from the formation. New officers will also go through stricter physical selection than before.

Conclusion

The Russian political tradition is to periodically reorganize the services responsible for state security, changing the names, structures, subordinates and functionaries. Some formations are given competences. These changes are accompanied by personnel changes at the highest levels. After each revolution, Western experts and analysts dealing with Russia's problems try to understand what happened, what the reason was and what the consequences of these moves will be³⁰.

The concept of strengthening the state security by creating a special formation is not a Russian *novum*. However, unlike other forms of this formation in the case of Russia, subordinating it directly to the President of the Russian Federation is a manifestation of the progressive militarization of the state, as well as a proof that Putin allows the concentration of power in the hands of those who have the greatest confidence.

The formation of *Rosgvard*, in which the composition, in addition to Internal Army Ministry of Interior, has entered all special units, subject to the Minister of Internal Affairs, means the establishment of a strong, militarized formation of internal forces sub-

ject to the head of state only and able to conduct independent activities in Russia without coordination with other services.

It also means that in Russia's internal policy, a priority is still to ensure stability in the current political system, especially in view of the potential escalation of the dangers resulting from the economic crisis and western divisions. Modern changes are also a signal that the current authorities of the Russian Federation are determined to use force against their own society in the event of any signs of internal instability³¹. These changes are also an evidence of the Kremlin's steadfast stance, which excludes any political concessions to its internal adversaries.

The Presidential decision to create a separate internal army also indicates that the Kremlin treats terrorist threats with enormous respect. On the other hand, the threat of terrorism can be interpreted very broadly, for example in the spirit of the popular *hybrid war concept*, where active paramilitary forces systematically destabilize the state.

References

- 21-я бригада оперативного назначения войск национальной гвардии России награждена орденом Жукова. Rosgvard.ru (In Russian). Russia. Interim Information Center of the Russian Federation FS-VNG.
- Andrusiewicz A., 2001, *Carowie i cesarze Rosji*, Warszawa.
- Dura M., „Gwardia Putina” może strzelać do tłumu, <http://www.cyberdefence24.pl/355616,gwardia-putina-moze-strzelac-do-tlumu>.
- Dura M., Rusza organizacja „Gwardii Putina”, <http://www.defence24.pl/360271,rusza-organizacja-gwardii-putina>.
- Heller M., 2005, *Historia imperium rosyjskiego*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa.
- Kossecki J., 1984, *Tajniki sterowania ludźmi*, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Warszawa.

²⁹ P. Żochowski, Rosja: Gwardia Narodowa, czyli armia wewnętrzna wkracza do gry, ANALIZY OSW 06.04.2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/>, (access 13.04.2016).

³⁰ M. Sakiewicz, Gwardia Narodowa czy Pretoriańska? <http://www.kresy.pl/publicystyka,analizy?zobacz/gwardia-narodowa-czy-pretoriańska>, (access 24.09.2016).

³¹ Ibidem.

- Latynina J., Private Putin National Guard, The Moscow Times (April 4, 2012).
- National Guard to obtain a license for peacekeeping operations abroad, <https://www.rt.com>.
- Sakiewicz M., Gwardia Narodowa czy Pretoriańska? <http://www.kresy.pl/publicystyka>, analizy?zobacz/gwardia-narodowa-czy-pretorianska.
- Skrynnikow R., 1979, Iwan Groźny, Seria: Biografie Sławnych Ludzi, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Wielki słownik ortograficzny PWN z zasadami pisowni i interpunkcji, red. naukowa E. Polańskiego, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2016.
- Żochowski P., Rosja: Gwardia Narodowa, czyli armia wewnętrzna wkracza do gry, ANALIZY OSW 06.04.2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/>.
- Указ Президента Российской Федерации от 05.04.2016 № 159 „О внесении изменения в состав Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации, утвержденный Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 25 мая 2012. N 715”.