

The Moscow army expo 2022 takes place amid the Russia-Ukraine war

WRITTEN BY ROSELLA MUZZEDDU

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Introduction

The international military-technical forum "Army-2022" officially opened on August 15 and lasted until August 21 in the Moscow Region Exhibition Centre "Patriot". The event was organised by the Russian Ministry of Defence.

The format of the forum included exhibitions, demonstrations, scientific and business programs as well as cultural and artistic events.

The dominant agenda topics of business events were artificial intelligence technologies and the diversification of the Russian defence industry. (Aviation&Defence Universe, 2022).

The annual expo comes nearly six months after the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and it included a variety of "family-friendly" exhibits designed to promote the Kremlin's propaganda narrative. (Meduza, 2022).

There were stands displaying "trophies" from Ukraine, visitors taking selfies and holding guns at the Kalashnikov pavilion, but also interactive installations invited families to patch up a wounded soldier. (Ilyushina, 2022).

The opening ceremony of the exhibition was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin, and more than 1,500 Russian and foreign defence industry companies displayed nearly 28,000 military and civilian products within the framework of the exhibition.

A total of 351 units of serial models of weapons, military and special equipment from the Russian Ministry of Defence were presented.

President Putin in his opening speech at the exhibition stated: "We are ready to offer our allies and partners the most modern types of weapons, from small arms to armoured vehicles and artillery, from warplanes to drones. These guns are in demand among military professionals all over the world for their reliability, quality, and most importantly, their high efficiency. Almost all of them have been used many times in real military operations." (Defense here, 2022).

Statistics Summary

According to the military department, 1,497 enterprises and organizations took part in the event and presented 28,536 samples of military and dual-use products and representatives of 85 foreign countries sent their official military delegations to take part in the forum. The total number of foreign military representatives was more than 700.

The forum was visited by 1,903,536 people during its entire duration and Rosoboronexport signed two contracts worth over \$390 million at the Army-2022 forum.

While the Russian Defence Ministry reported on its website that they signed 36 contracts involving 24 defence industry companies at the Army 2022 expo, reaching up to 525 billion rubles (the U.S. \$9 billion).

The ministry also noted it expects to get more than 3,700 samples of military equipment. (Military Times, 2022).

China's participation

There were 160 bilateral meetings with foreign partners and Belarus, Iran and China presented their national expositions.

For its part, China showed off a variety of defence products to Russian officials and the general public, including armoured vehicles, military ambulances, the JF-17 fighter jet equipped with the Russian RD-93 engine, and the J-31 jet, an analogue of the Russian-made Su-57.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the Chinese stand.

Even if Russia has shown a general reluctance to buy foreign-made military equipment, one Russian company, Intellect Machine JSC, presented a grenade launcher attached to a Chinese-made robot resembling a dog. Russian media reported that the robot, made by Unitree Robotics, is available for purchase through the Chinese online retailer AliExpress.

According to the developers, the robodog, or specifically, the M-81 complex, can "aim and shoot, transport weapons, it can be used for civilian purposes in an emergency zone for doing reconnaissance, walking through rubble, and delivering medicines. In combat use, the robodog can also be used in target designation, patrolling and guarding.

The manufacturer positions the robot as a companion and according to its specs, it can carry a load of up to 3 kg, reach speeds of up to 17 km/h and hold a charge for up to 4 hours.

However, according to customer reviews, its usual runtime is from 30 minutes to a couple of hours, and its maximum speed does not exceed 4-5 km/h. (The Insider, 2022).

This is not the first Chinese development which has been presented as a domestic one in Russia.

In August, the media reported a new development by a Skolkovo engineer: the microcomputer Repka that could replace the foreign-made Raspberry Pi. It turned out that the innovation was based on the Chinese single-board Nano Pi K1 Plus, which has been on sale since 2018. (The Insider, 2022).

In Russia, the robot dog "Unitree Go1" is sold on the Robosobaka website, which belongs to Revotech LLC. The company says on its website and social media pages that it is associated with Skolkovo.

Impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine: weapons export

Russia is the second-largest weapons exporter after the United States, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (SIPRI , 2022). In Southeast Asia, however, it ranks number one (Green, 2022). Between 2000 and 2021, the value of Russia's arms exports to the region was US\$10.87 billion (Chew, 2022).

India, China, Egypt and Algeria are the top foreign customers of Russian weapons, but India's imports are declining, according to a report published in March.

Alexander Mikheyev, the director general of Rosoboronexport, said arms export revenue total in 2022 is likely to total about \$10.8 billion, which would be roughly 26% lower than reported for 2021. Russia's arms exports fell by 26 per cent between 2012-16 and 2017-21, and its share of global arms exports decreased from 24 per cent to 19 per cent.

The overall drop in Russian arms exports between 2012-16 and 2017-21 was almost entirely due to decreases in arms exports to India (-47 per cent) and Vietnam (-71 per cent). (Pieter d. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova, Siemon t. Wezeman, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed weapons production while the industry tried to implement safety measures as well as resolve logistics problems and production capacity issues.

Additionally, Russia has been hit with economic sanctions over its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and its ongoing invasion of the country.

"Countries that were seeking to acquire Russian equipment were already thinking twice due to the risk of being sanctioned by the U.S. and others," said Tom Waldwyn, a research associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"Although it is still too early to tell quite what the long-term impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine will be on its defence industry and exports, it seems likely that it will have a significant negative effect," the think tank analyst said. "In the short term, deliveries of ammunition and spare parts will likely be directed to support the Russian war effort."

Ultimately, the strength of Russia's defence-industrial base could depend on action from European nations.

"If European countries can reduce their reliance on Russia for energy supplies, this will eventually have a significant impact on Russian government revenues and, in turn, the kind of investment in its defence industry that Russia can afford. Reductions in investment will affect capacity and quality, both in terms of technical capability and personnel," Waldwyn said. (Defence News, 2022).

On August 18, 2022, within the framework of the VIII Army 2022 International Military and Technical Forum, Alexander Mikheev, Director General of Rosoboronexport (part of Rostec State Corporation) and Deputy Chairman of the Russian Engineering Union (REU), chaired a meeting of the REU's Committee for the Development of Foreign Trade Activities in relation to Military Products, which he heads.

During the meeting, the Committee considered the issues of legislative regulation of the system of military-technical cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign states and discussed the issues related to state support for military-technical cooperation and the country's defence-industrial complex.

Rosoboronexport also took part in the III International Scientific and Technical Conference "Military Law in the System of National Security" held during Army 2022 with the report called "Changes in the legal regulation of military-technical cooperation between the Russian Federation and foreign states, the establishment of new legal institutions". (Rosoboronexport, Russian Defence Export, 2022).

Despite the lagging successes in Ukraine, Moscow, one of the world's major arms exporters, boasted of its military hardware to potential buyers from dozens of countries. (The Moscow Times, 2022).

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