



# Russia's Limit of Advance

## Scenarios

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Russia's ability to deploy military forces around the world is significantly depleted from the Soviet era. This report describes the strengths and weaknesses of Russia's ground force deployment capacity. Russia's armed forces are much improved from the 1990s, but lack of adequate transportation, political limitations, shortfalls in sustainment, limits on conscript deployment, and other factors constrain its global ground force deployment.



### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How far can Russia deploy a capable ground force, and at what cost?
- How would such variables as distance, terrain, political accessibility, and the availability of logistics assets affect a Russian ground force deployment, and how does the impact of these factors change as different demands are placed on the force?
- Which scenarios would be the most taxing for Russia's overall military operational capacity and global deployment capability?



### KEY FINDINGS

Russian ground forces have a sharply limited effective deployment range

- Russia's deployment capability near its western and southwestern borders is significantly better than elsewhere, a product of robust lines of communication, transport infrastructure, and air defense, as well as easier-to-negotiate terrain.
- Far deployments (more than two countries away or across large bodies of water) are particularly challenging for Russian ground forces, with capability gaps and poor support for basing, overflight, and naval access leaving them vulnerable to interdiction.
- The size and capability of Russia's military transportation fleet is a major limiting factor in its ability to deploy ground combat forces, and it must rely on nonmilitary assets to transport forces and equipment in some scenarios.

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- Russian armored and support vehicles tend to be lighter and smaller than many of their Western counterparts. However, this does not make air transport practical in most cases, so slower movement by ground, rail, or sea is necessary, reducing deployment speed to far contingencies.
- Although Russia has a large number of ground combat forces, its limited number of *immediately ready* ground forces makes large combat deployments difficult. In addition, conscripts make up a large portion of Russia's military force, but there are political limitations on deploying them to combat operations.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- The analytic community would benefit from a model for Russian ground force power projection. With its focus on the logistics of deployment over the sustainment of forces, this research can only partially answer this question.
- Wargaming and simulation of Russian ground force deployments would benefit from incorporating random delays, challenges posed by conscription, and other stressing factors.
- Follow-on studies should build on the foundation provided by the Russian ground force order of battle and deployment calculator developed for this research. A wider variety of scenarios that explore the impact of different combinations of factors could provide additional insights to support U.S. military decisionmaking.