

# RUSSIAN AIRPOWER

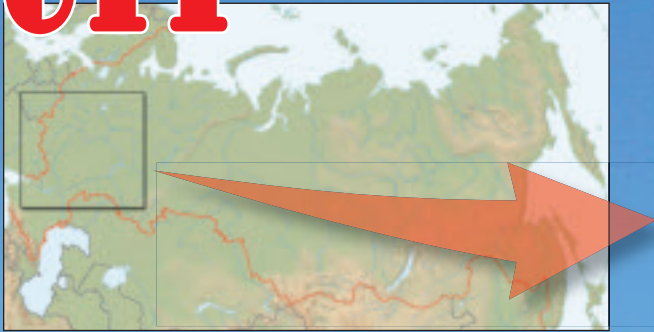
Photography by Aleksey Mikheyev

Russian aerial power could overwhelm its European neighbors.

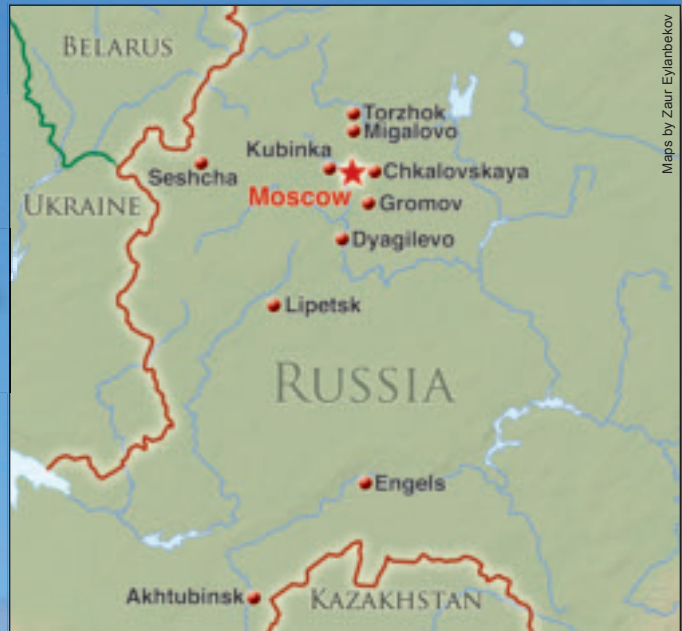




# 2014



This feature depicts aircraft from various air bases located in the western part of Russia.



Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, massing of military forces along the border, and stoking internal unrest in Ukraine have ratcheted tensions between Russia and the US and NATO allies to a post-Cold War high. The Russian military is in the midst of a massive modernization effort to replace the bulk of its aging hardware with modern weapons systems, with an emphasis on Russia's strategic nuclear force. Russian air forces are central to President Vladimir Putin's push to project Russian power within the former Soviet sphere and around the world. Here, weapon handlers prepare to load S-13 air-to-ground rockets on an Su-24M strike aircraft for a live-fire exercise at a training range in Lipetsk. An Su-24 made several "provocative" low-level passes over the destroyer USS Donald Cook in the Black Sea in April, sparking sharp words from the Pentagon.

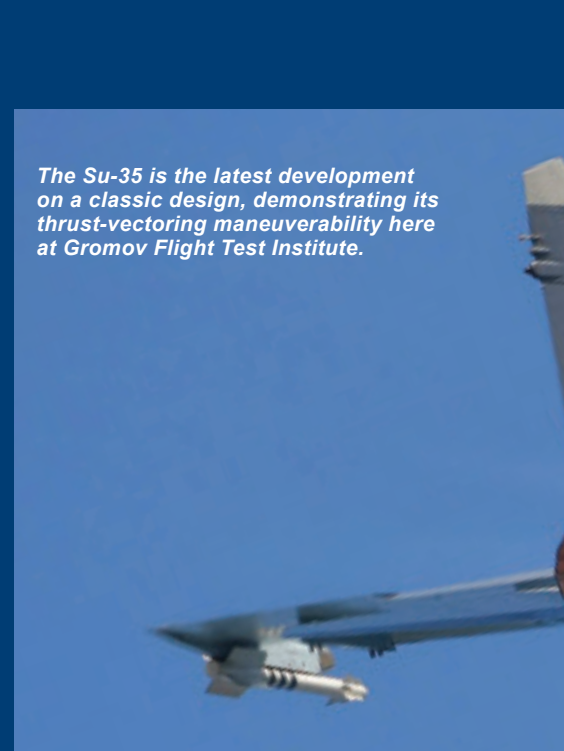




*Ground crew tow a Forepost, which is a license-built copy of an Israeli remotely piloted aircraft called Searcher, at Kubinka Air Base, highlighting Russia's efforts to enhance joint battlefield capabilities, something sorely lacking in the past.*



*A well-bundled crew chief waits to recover an Su-24M fighter-bomber after a training sortie from Lipetsk Combat Training Center.*



*The Su-35 is the latest development on a classic design, demonstrating its thrust-vectoring maneuverability here at Gromov Flight Test Institute.*



*Weapons technicians transport a pair of R-27R radar guided missiles, which are standard air-to-air armament for Russian fighter aircraft.*



*Escorted by a MiG-29, this Il-80VKP aerial command post is one of four based at Chkalovskaya near Moscow. Like USAF's E-4B, the aircraft is equipped for secure communication with ballistic missile submarines.*





*The Migalovo-based Antonov An-22 Antheus heavy transport is the largest propeller-driven military aircraft in service worldwide.*



*The Yak-130 prototype, shown here on a test flight, was developed in partnership with Italy as a light-attack aircraft and trainer.*



*The Russian air force is constantly upgrading its Il-20 electronic intelligence-gathering platforms, such as the two seen here earlier this year at Kubinka (foreground). The colorful Su-27 in the background is part of the Russian Knights flight demonstration team.*





*A Beriev A-50 AWACS shows off its freshly painted red stars on a post-upgrade flight from Gromov in 2013.*



*Based at Seshca, An-124 heavy airlifters such as this one are capable of carrying even the largest military payloads. NATO countries contracted civilian-owned Antonovs to haul equipment and material to Afghanistan.*

*The prototype for Russia's newest fighter, the advanced Sukhoi T-50, performs an "ascending cobra" while showing off its maneuverability during an aerial display over Gromov in 2013.*



*The Kamov Ka-31 was designed to provide ship-borne early warning for the Russian fleet.*

*A ground crew prepares to launch a MiG-31 on a training sortie from Lipetsk. The nearly Mach 3-capable aircraft was designed to intercept high-speed targets and has little competition for speed today.*







*A coaxial-rotor Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopter based at the Russian Army's Torzhok combat weapons center is armed with a 30 mm cannon and rocket pods to provide realistic training for air crews. It is seen here during exercises at the Kushalino range.*

*The Su-34 fighter-bomber, seen here taxiing at Lipetsk in 2010, was designed to replace the legacy Su-24.*



*A crew chief marshals an Su-34 fighter-bomber at Lipetsk in 2009. The aircraft is capable of delivering an array of the latest weapons.*



*A MiG-29K fighter configured for naval use approaches the Indian Navy carrier INS Vikramadiya during carrier acceptance trials in 2013. Russia ordered the type last year to equip its sole conventional-capable carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov.*

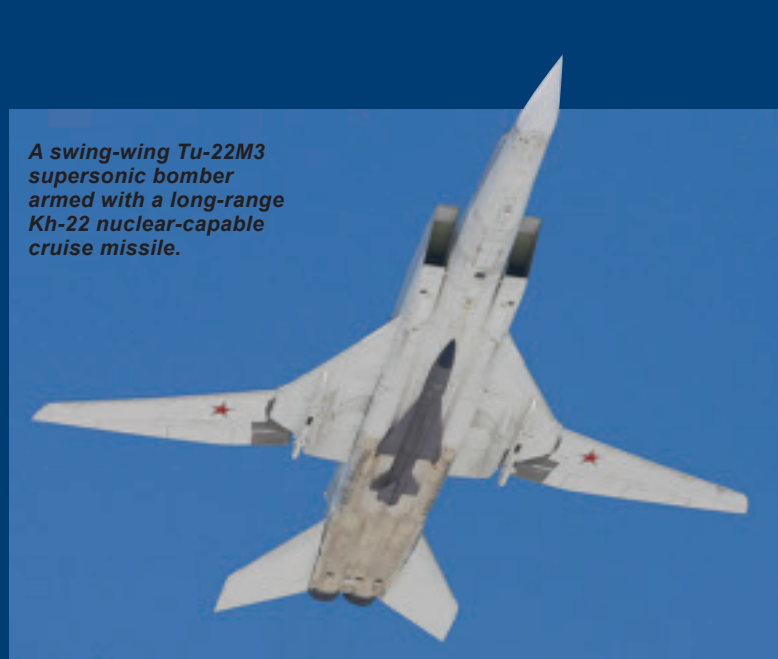


*An airman inspects a Mi-28N helicopter rotor head before takeoff at Torzhok Airfield in April.*





*A fearsome Mi-28N attack helicopter silhouetted at low level during maneuvers.*



*A swing-wing Tu-22M3 supersonic bomber armed with a long-range Kh-22 nuclear-capable cruise missile.*



*A T-50 advanced fighter prototype at Gromov in 2012.*



*An Engels AB-based Tu-160 supersonic strategic bomber, known as "White Swan" in Russia, lifts off from Kubinka AB. Russia has recently announced plans to develop a fifth generation bomber.*



*Ground crew repack fighter drag-chutes left by aircraft taxiing off the runway after landing at Lipetsk.*



*An aircrew inspects the weapons, sensor suite, and equipment of an Mi-28N attack helicopter before a sortie at the Torzhok tactical training center earlier this year.*



*An Mi-8MTV2 (foreground) and an Mi-8MTV5, variants of the venerable 'Hip' tactical support helicopter, lift off during exercises at Torzhok in March.*



*A MiG-31B heavy fighter-interceptor escorts an A-50 AWACS during a formation demonstration in 2010.*



*A pair of Su-25 attack aircraft from Kant Air Base pound practice targets on the Edelweiss range in Kyrgyzstan. The Su-25 is Russia's premier close air support platform and saw use by both Russian and Georgian forces during the 2008 war.*

