

Russia to Reduce Ukrainian Defense Imports 95% by 2015

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The top section of a tank being repaired at a tank factory in the Siberian city of Omsk.

Russia is on track to reduce its imports of Ukrainian defense technology and hardware by 95 percent by the end of 2015, Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov said Tuesday.

While touring the Zvezda shipbuilding facility in the Primorye region of Russia's Far East, Borisov said that Russia's defense industry is making good progress toward localizing the production of vital military hardware — such as components for rockets, intercontinental ballistic missiles and aircraft — to domestic production lines, ITAR-Tass reported.

Last week, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko announced that Ukraine was banning military cooperation with Russia, a move that ITAR-Tass reported would directly affect 79 Ukrainian and 859 Russian defense firms. The defense industries of the two nations are deeply linked as a result of their common Soviet heritage.

Before instituting the ban, about 70 percent of Ukrainian-made military goods were exported to Russia, Reuters reported in May.

Interim Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Yarema clarified Poroshenko's announcement later the same day, telling news channel ICTV that Ukraine would "continue cooperation only on dual technologies, for example, helicopter engines that can be used for defense and civilian purposes."

Deputy Defense Minister Dmitry Rogozin — the space and defense industry tsar — responded to Poroshenko's announcement by calling for Moscow to end its dependence on Ukrainian-made components by localizing the production of key military items, a process that he said would take 2 years.

Rogozin brushed off the gravity of Ukraine's decision, saying that Moscow had a week earlier preemptively moved to mitigate the effects of any potential military trade embargo enacted by Kiev. Rogozin wrote on his Facebook page on July 17 that a plan had been submitted to the Defense Manufacturing Commission detailing precisely what needs to be done to replace Ukrainian imports with domestic manufacturing.

Russia's dependence on Ukrainian defense imports is a by-product of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. When the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic became an independent state in 1991, Kiev found itself in possession of vital Soviet-era defense industry assets such as the Yuzhmash factory in Eastern Ukraine, which produces space rockets and satellites, engines for helicopters and airplanes, and missiles, along with machinery for civilian uses.

For decades this did not present a problem for Moscow, as Kiev remained politically loyal and dependent on Russian military orders. However, following the ousting of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February and Russia's subsequent annexation of the Crimean peninsula, relations between Kiev and Moscow have hit their post-Soviet nadir.

See also:

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