

Russia to Stick to Costly Rearmament Plan in 2015

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu

Despite Russia's economic troubles, the Defense Ministry will continue to focus on its ambitious 20 trillion ruble (\$350 billion) rearmament plan in 2015, state news agency TASS reported Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu as saying on Tuesday.

Shoigu said the army is expected to receive 700 new armored vehicles, 1,550 vehicles of various other types, 126 airplanes, 88 helicopters and two brigades of Iskander-M missiles in 2015. The navy, for its part, should receive two refurbished submarines and five surface vessels, TASS reported.

Shoigu also said that 1,600 new infrastructure projects will be completed for the military in 2015, topping last year's 1,260. Improving and expanding housing, medical facilities and training ranges are a key part of the military's modernization effort.

These costly improvements, however, come at a time of increasing economic uncertainty in Russia as the falling oil price hammers the federal budget. The plan has been further complicated by a Ukrainian ban on military equipment sales to Russia, which has forced Russia to seek domestic substitutes.

Along with new equipment, the Defense Ministry is pushing to attract a new class of soldier into the conscript-heavy military: volunteers. Shoigu said that by the end of 2015 the military hopes to recruit 52,000 volunteer soldiers. At the end of 2014, some 300,000 contract soldiers were serving in the military, 70,000 of whom joined last year.

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