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Russia Pulls Thousands of Soviet-Era Military Vehicles From Major Storage Facility

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The Vagzhanovo military equipment depot outside Ulan-Ude in the republic of Buryatia. **Military Informant / VK**

Russia's largest known military equipment storage facility has been stripped of nearly half of the Soviet-era tanks and armored vehicles that were stored on its grounds before Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, The Moscow Times' Russian service reported, analyzing satellite imagery of the storage site.

The Vagzhanovo military equipment depot — located outside the republic of Buryatia's capital of Ulan-Ude in eastern Siberia — is just one of nearly two dozen such sites identified by The Moscow Times' Russian service using open-source data and it covers an area of over 10 square kilometers.

Satellite imagery dated five months before Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine shows that around 3,840 Soviet-era tanks and armored vehicles were stored outside Vagzhanovo,

according to the outlet.

But over a year later in November 2022, around 2,600 of the military vehicles remained at the site — a decrease of just over 40% of the total amount observed before the war.

While military storage facilities can house equipment in buildings with ventilation and heating systems, inside unheated hangars, or under awnings outside, most of the armored equipment observed at Vagzhanovo was stored outdoors, The Moscow Times' Russian service noted.

Vagzhanovo however does have 10 hangars, which, according to the outlet, can accommodate up to 400 armored vehicles.

At the same time, around half of the tanks at the facility were missing turrets, suggesting that those which have been removed over the past year may have been sent to be refurbished with new parts and equipment, as Moscow has increasingly resorted to sending aging tanks to the battlefield to compensate for its staggering equipment losses.

According to the Dutch OSINT project Oryx, Russia had by May 31 lost over 2,000 tanks out of the 3,000 combat-ready vehicles of its original reserve when it invaded Ukraine last year.

Meanwhile, according to media reports, Russia is reimporting parts for tanks and missiles previously sold to India and Myanmar, potentially to improve older weapons and equipment destined for use in Ukraine.

The reimported equipment includes thousands of sighting telescopes and cameras for installation in tanks, which analysts say could be used to modernize Russia's old T-72 tanks currently sitting in storage.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in July called for more tanks to be manufactured "to meet the needs of Russian forces" in Ukraine after Kyiv launched a counteroffensive with Western arms.

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