

Russia Showcases New Weaponry, Captured Western Arms at Flagship Military Forum

By [Giovanni Pigni](#)

August 20, 2023



Giovanni Pigni / MT

KUBINKA, Moscow region — Two children could be seen playing inside a military personnel carrier emblazoned with the letter Z — a symbol of the invasion of Ukraine — and the words “NATO won’t pass.”

The vehicle was one of thousands of pieces of hardware on display at the Army-2023 international military-technical forum, Russia’s largest military fair that takes place each year at a defense-themed park outside Moscow.

“I came to show the latest achievements of our warcraft to my son,” said Ivan, 45, one of the children’s parents, as he took their photo. “The exhibition is great.”

The Defense Ministry-organized event, which kicked off on Aug. 14 and ends Sunday, has

been the main platform for Russian defense firms to showcase their latest equipment and technologies since 2015.

Since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, it has also become a part of the country's efforts to bolster patriotism and support for the invasion, which the Kremlin increasingly paints as an existential battle against NATO and the West the longer it drags on.

The inclusion of stands and activities geared toward children appeared to be part of a wider initiative to teach youngsters [basic combat skills](#) and the Kremlin's narrative of the [history of the war](#).

Ivan said he thinks becoming acquainted with weapons should be an important part of his son's education.

"He needs to be prepared for what may await us in the future, to defend his Motherland," he told The Moscow Times. "I think this situation will go on for a long time."

At a nearby stand, children were seen learning how to assemble and disassemble mock firearms. The stand was set up by the [Military-Technical Association](#), an organization that preserves historical military equipment and provides "military-patriotic" education to children.

"We want to educate our youngsters with the right traditions," said the organization's head Alexei Migalin, adding that he doesn't see any risk in popularizing firearms in Russian society.

"As you know from the mass media, shootings and other accidents involving firearms happen all the time in the U.S.," he says. "In Russia, there is nothing like that, we have a different mentality: we don't use weapons to attack, but only to defend ourselves."

There have in fact been a number of deadly shooting incidents in Russia in recent years.

This is the second year in which the forum has taken place against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, where Russian forces, which have not achieved a major battlefield victory in months, are currently trying to push back against a grinding Ukrainian counteroffensive.

A forum volunteer told The Moscow Times that heightened security measures were implemented this year due to the high risk of drone attacks. Authorities have regularly [reported](#) Ukrainian drone attacks on Moscow and its outskirts all summer.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu used the event as a chance to boast of Russia's superiority in arms and military production compared to those of Ukraine and its Western allies.

"The West's widely advertised technology has in fact turned out to be far from flawless," Shoigu [said](#) at the forum's opening ceremony. He also claimed that the Russian defense industry has not only adapted to the pressure of Western sanctions but "increased its capacity" in certain areas.

According to the Dutch OSINT project Oryx, Russia [has been increasingly deploying](#) outdated

Soviet-era tanks such as the T-54, T-55 and T-62 after losing a large number of its more modern vehicles.

Loudspeakers across the event venue played recordings of voices telling the stories of soldiers who distinguished themselves in combat in Ukraine. On a stage, musical acts performed patriotic songs.

Not far from there, a photography exhibition dedicated to the resurgence of “Ukrainian Nazism” displayed images purporting to show far-right groups during Ukraine’s Maidan revolution and Soviet monuments covered with anti-Soviet graffiti in Ukraine.

Moscow has alleged that Ukraine is led by neo-Nazis as one of its justifications for launching its offensive.

The Defense Ministry claimed over 400 billion rubles (\$4.2 billion) in contracts [were signed](#) during this year’s event and said Russian troops will receive more than 2,500 types of weapons and special equipment.

According to officials, 1,500 Russian enterprises and 85 foreign businesses from countries including India, China and Iran took part in the forum.

The forum was opened to the public in its final three days, attracting visitors from across Russia, who flocked to Patriot Park in the Moscow suburb of Kubinka to get a glimpse of the latest models in Russia’s arsenal.

Among the highlights of the forum were the cutting-edge T-14 Armata tank, [an improved version of the BTR-82A](#) armored personnel carrier, and the new 2S43 Malva self-propelled artillery gun.

This year, the forum made headlines when Russian authorities announced it would also display Western military hardware captured in Ukraine.

These appeared to include, among others, an [American M777 howitzer](#), an Australia-made Bushmaster personnel carrier and a French AMX-10 armored fighting vehicle.

Forum volunteers told The Moscow Times that access to the Western vehicles was restricted to a limited number of people who were required to register in advance.

Related article: [In Photos: Russia Flaunts Captured Western Military Hardware at Annual Army Expo](#)

“It would feel good to look at the destroyed vehicles of the Western parasites who have caused all this mess,” said one visitor who was unable to see the exhibition and who declined to share his name. He said he and his friends had come to the forum all the way from the republic of Komi in northern Russia.

In another exhibit, a rudimentary-looking drone was displayed on top of a military personnel carrier. The drone carried a bomb painted with the words “to Berlin” and “to London.” Next to it, a sign read: “Cheap delivery to Europe.”

“That’s for bombing the Ukros [a slur for Ukrainians] and the fascists and destroying everyone who is supporting them, in Europe, America, anywhere,” said Sergei Zhernovoy, the founder and [director of Soliton](#), the defense company behind the exhibit.

Zhernovoy’s company, a regular participant in the Army forum, produces drones, bulletproof vests and other weaponry for the Russian military.

He candidly admitted that his business has been delivering weapons to pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine since 2014, as part of the broader unofficial support that Russia had provided to the separatists in their fight against Kyiv before Moscow’s full-scale invasion.

“Some picked up a weapon and went to fight, while I have been helping with military production and other material things,” he said.

Original url:

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