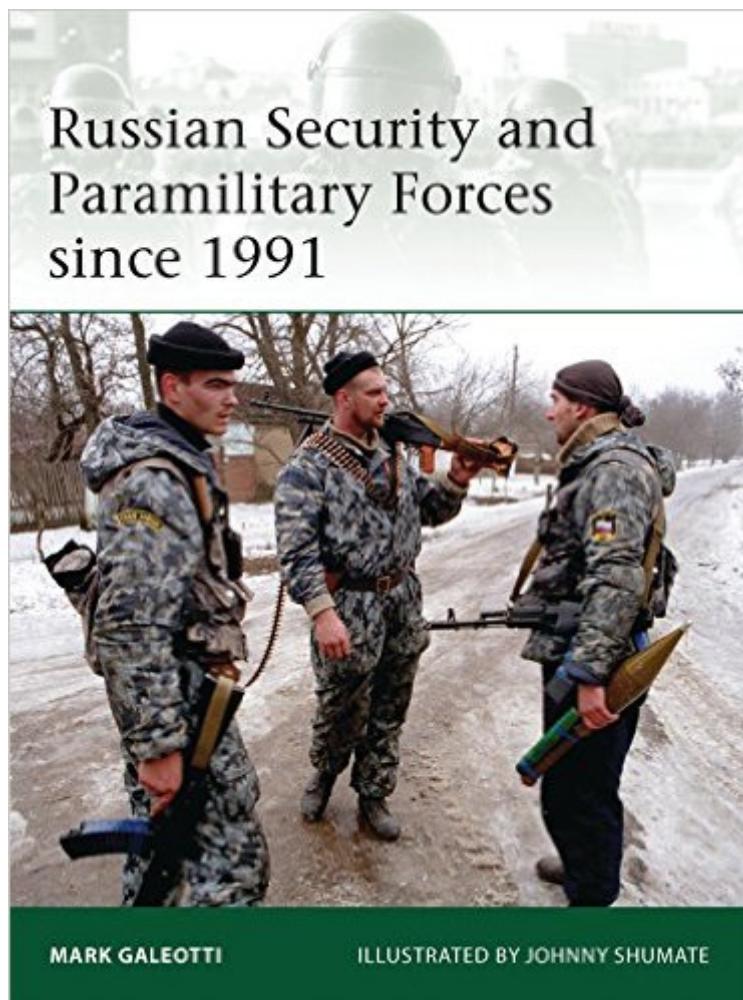


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# Russian Security And Paramilitary Forces Since 1991 (Elite)



MARK GALEOTTI

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHNNY SHUMATE



## Synopsis

Whilst under Putin's regime the size of Russia's regular forces has shrunk recently and will continue to do so, its security and paramilitary elements have become increasingly powerful. In fact, recently they have proliferated - as have their special uniforms and kit - and have become disproportionately important, spearheading all recent operations. They seem set to remain Russia's most active armed agencies for the immediate future. In parallel, within the murky world where government and private interests intersect, a number of paramilitary 'private armies' operate almost as vigilantes, with government toleration or approval. This book offers a succinct overview of the official, semi-official and unofficial agencies that pursue Russian government and quasi-government objectives by armed means, from the 200,000-strong Interior Troops, through Police and other independent departmental forces, down to private security firms (in Moscow alone, the largest four security companies have c. 8,000 armed operatives). While some elements have been created in response to real challenges from terrorism and organized crime, other special groups owe more to 'bureaucratic warlordism' in other Ministries. Most visibly, several government agencies have been heavily involved in the wars in Chechnya and elsewhere in the Caucasus. This conflict has spread, requiring counter-terrorist operations both there and inside Russia by the Interior Troops and the Federal Security Service (ex-KGB). Counter-terrorist defence is also provided by a Presidential Security Service. Simultaneously, the long fight against the 'Mafiya' has given birth to special Police and other Justice Ministry units. At the fringes of such activities are parachute-trained combat medics, disaster-relief and fire-fighting officers of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. In the face of lawlessness born in the chaotic years of Boris Yeltsin's reign in the 1990s, there has also been a toleration of armed civilian vigilante groups in the Caucasus and Russian Far East, with the reappearance of Cossack patrols and other groups, which are provided at a community level with arms and uniforms in return for taking over local security. Featuring rare photographs, and detailed color plates of uniforms, insignia and equipment, Mark Galeotti, a renowned authority, explores the Putin regime's shadowy special-forces apparatus, active in an array of counter-terrorist and counter-mafia wars since 1991.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces since 1991" is a superb introduction into the proliferation and use of specialized security units in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union. In this Osprey Elite Series book, author Mark Galeotti makes sense of the many heavily-armed and specially-trained paramilitary organizations created to police dissidents and demonstrations, defeat terrorists and criminal groups, and conduct counterinsurgency inside and outside the borders of Russia. The old Soviet Union had a variety of specialized security units designed to help the regime maintain internal control. The fall of the Soviet Union created new instabilities and threats to order. The institutional response has been to create and equip units capable of armed response to threats. The MVD or police, the Interior Ministry, the Federal Security Service, and other government agencies each have their own specialized units. These specialized units resemble SWAT teams, heavily-armed police, special forces, commandos, or even conventional military units. The book has an excellent selection of photographs, illustrations, and color plates to specify the uniforms, equipment, and identifying insignia of security and paramilitary units. The author cites a number of case studies, including the Chechen campaigns, the 2004 Beslan Massacre, and the Dubrovka Theater hostage crisis, as examples of unit operating methods. "Russian Security and Paramilitary Forces since 1991" is especially impressive given the constant changes in the naming conventions and subordination of some units; highly recommended.

I learned a lot about the Russian Security Forces and corrected two misconceptions from earlier misunderstandings. This was a good read, albeit I doubt it will be a big seller due to its intensive specialization. Not only was the information good and interesting, it was a pleasure to read it as well as look at photos to gain a better understanding of their operating environment.

This is one of the best Osprey books I've seen. My thanks to Osprey and to the author Mark Galeotti for putting out a book on this subject. Everything about Russian history is fascinating, especially their military, police, and security organs. As for the photos and color plates, they are some of the best I've seen. The color plates alone are worth the price of the book. My highest recommendations.

This is an outstanding book. I have several hundred Osprey products, but this takes the cake. Great pictures and first hand knowledge create a clear picture of a complicated and convoluted security/police organ. I recommend this book to anyone for any area of interest.

As you read through the myriad of Russian forces and their Byzantine structures, three things may come to mind. First, the proliferation of units since 1991 has come largely during Putin's reign. Second, the inter-agency rivalries must be enormous and so would be coordination and cost. Lastly, it was this type of structure that helped end The Third Reich. These forces number over 400,000 personnel...remember this does not include the military. That seems mind boggling but Russia covers 9 time zones, have 143 million citizens and is comprised of 83 republics and regions (it is a country of committees that get little done). These forces protect the laws of the state not the rights of the individual. This feels palpable if you have ever visited the country. It also explains why there are dedicated forces set aside for crowd and riot control in larger urban centres. Author Galeotti does a fine job documenting purpose, equipment and uniform of each. Subtle in his tone is conflicting admiration for this might and a bewilderment for its existence.

I think author Mark Galeotti has done a fine job of giving the reader a lucid overview of the often confusing security situation in post-communist Russia. This is an Osprey book and has all the usual excellent photos and color plates. Good color artwork by Johnny Shumate too. The author begins with a short review of secret police since the communist revolution and subsequent state security (or, oppression, actually) apparatus as well as the confusing situation when the evil empire collapsed. The new government and the challenges it faced required a new look at internal police and security requirements. It didn't always rationally make good decisions. There were units retained from the Soviet era, new units created (but not fully funded), expanded roles for other services. Like in the US, where SWAT teams have proliferated among federal agencies (even the Forest Service has a SWAT team), many of these units are created to have an "elite" unit and get more funding. Some of these units were thrown into combat in Chechnya as a result of the implosion of the Red Army and subsequent Russian conventional army. Interior ministry troops, state police,

spetsnaz (from different agencies...yeah, confusing, isn't it?) and had to struggle with poor training, scsnty resources and an effective opponent. The Beslan massacre and the Dubrovka Theater are covered briefly and give a good idea of the effectiveness of these units. One will note the often conflicting and confusing jurisdictions and overlapping responsibilities. The book ends with a brief, but decent, inventory of weapons used by these units. On the whole, a good intro to the subject and I do recommend it with four stars.

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