

Shoigu Wants Military to Focus on Core Competencies

By [Alexy Bratersky](#)

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Rogozin said that Russia needs more sophisticated military equipment. **Igor Tabakov**

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the military should finally rid itself of "non-relevant functions," during a high-level meeting on Wednesday.

Despite the bravado tone of speeches dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the government's defense industry commission, Shoigu openly disagreed with senior officials during his speech, which followed other government notables, including First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin.

Shoigu, who seemed distressed by what other speakers at the event had to say, said that the Defense Ministry is ready to give away many of its mammoth Soviet-era service enterprises so that it can concentrate on defense functions only. He made his statement after Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who opened the conference, had left.

He also said the military by itself should not formulate prices for defense contractors, many of which are monopolies. "We shouldn't deceive each other that we alone can formulate the price for planes and rockets," Shoigu said.

He added that the Finance Ministry and Industry and Trade Ministry should take part in formulating prices for industry players. Shoigu even labeled his short statement "I can't keep silent," a reference to a well-known article by Leo Tolstoy that lambasted the tsarist government for its policy of capital punishment.

Rogozin said that while he understood that the Defense Ministry was more concerned about getting equipment delivered than about money, both sides were looking to resolve the issue. "If the Defense Ministry backs away from price formulation, then it should also distance itself from the finances, allocated for those needs," he said in response to a question from the Moscow Times.

But he said Shoigu's fiscal policy is different from his predecessor Anatoly Serdyukov, who, he said personally controlled money flows in the ministry.

Shoigu also said the Defense Ministry should stop owning "non-relevant" enterprises, such as services firms whose staff does welding and repairs but are employees of the Defense Ministry.

"Let's do it once and do it correctly," said Shoigu, adding that the ministry was ready to give away more than 300 factories.

Defense analyst Pavel Felgenhauer, who attended Wednesday's conference, said Shoigu was continuing Serdyukov's policy regarding the idea that the defense department should shed non-core functions.

Serdyukov was dismissed from his post by President Vladimir Putin at the end of last year as part of an embezzlement investigation at the ministry's Oboronservis agency, which was formed to provide a range of services to the military.

Shoigu's speech was in sharp contrast to the speech of Rogozin, who said "the rudiments of the Cold War and Russophobia have not vanished from the world."

Rogozin acknowledged that the country's serious demographic problems would require more sophisticated military equipment.

"Since we can't have an army five times bigger, we have to have an army whose soldiers can each fight like five people," Rogozin said in reference to bringing more robotic equipment into the military. Rogozin said the lack of quality staff remained one of the biggest problems for the defense industry, known for low wages. Personnel from the former Soviet Union, as well as other countries, should be brought to Russia to work here, he added.

"We need fresh minds," said Rogozin, who added that he would appeal to the president to facilitate Russian citizenship to those foreign specialists who want to settle in here.

Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov said the lack of quality personal in the defense sector reflected the declining quality of the equipment received. He said the number of claims

from the ministry concerning defective products had increased 40 percent since 2011.

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