



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on May 9, 2012

Russia Celebrates Victory Day with Military Parade

On Wednesday, Russia commemorated the  67th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany, with a massive military parade in Moscow. The hour long ceremony was akin to the old May Day and Victory Day rallies held by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

During the 1990s the Yeltsin government did not regularly hold the celebrations, preferring to demonstrate a softer image to the World. The ceremonies were permanently reinstated by Russian President Putin in 2005 — the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Union's World War II victory. The 2005 Victory Day parade was the largest public military display by Russia since the apparent collapse of the Soviet Union.

Soviet emblems, including hammer and sickles and a giant replica of the Soviet Order of Victory, which bears the letters CCCP — the Cyrillic abbreviation for USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), adorned the Kremlin and surrounding buildings as roughly 11,000 Russian troops and armored vehicles paraded down Red Square.

In addition to troops from all branches of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, troops from other former Soviet republics marched along with their Russian comrades.

“For the last 20 years former USSR countries have developed [their] own traditions and holidays, but there is still this day — May 9 — which unifies all of them. This is a unique holiday for Russia, as it is the day when Russia discovered own national identity. After the war the people closed the ranks as a single nation,” said Russian ambassador to Ukraine Mikhail Zurabov.

Putin, who was inaugurated for a third term this past Monday, sent his regards to his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko, praising his leadership and relations between both states.

“I am convinced that a long tradition of friendship, good neighborliness and mutual support, focus on the development of closer integration ties within the CIS will continue to strengthen the Belarusian-Russian alliance, effective solution to the socio-economic problems based on democratic principles, human rights and freedoms,” Putin said.

Putin sent additional congratulatory messages to the heads of states of other former Soviet republics. “The allied relations and partnership between Armenia and Russia is characterized by old traditions of friendship and trust, close brotherly ties and deep respect for the veterans. The current generation is making a worthy contribution to the reinforcement of effective inter-state cooperation,” Putin said.

Putin inaugurated the nationwide Victory Day festivities on Tuesday, when he laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, located by the Kremlin. Parade rehearsals were conducted over night, between the laying of the wreath and the parade at 10am Moscow time on Wednesday.

That morning the ceremony commenced with the traditional goosestep of eight soldiers in dark blue and red dress uniforms. One soldier carried the flag of the Russian Federation while another carried the Victory Banner — the red Soviet flag with a grey hammer and sickle that was raised over the German Reichstag building.



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The Minister of Defense Anatoly Serdyukov rode down in motorcade and was officially saluted by a Russian general. Serdyukov and the general drove along the row of troops and formally addressed the various branches of the Russian armed forces.

Serdyukov officially handed over the ceremony to Putin, who then gave a speech stating that Russia will stand up for itself and defend its position in international affairs.

“Russia consistently conducts its policy for strengthening security in the world, and we have the great moral right to fundamentally and insistently stand up for our position,” Putin said. “Your courage and ability to love and defend your homeland will never recede into the past and will remain the hallmark of morals, patriotism and sense of civic duty in the eyes of the younger generation.”

Present at the ceremonies were an array of Soviet veterans and former world leaders including former Soviet General-Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev.

Following Putin’s speech, the parade commenced with the playing of the Russian national anthem, which uses the same music as the anthem of the Soviet Union.

Units marching included: Russian Ground Forces, Russian Air Force, Russian Navy, Russian Naval Infantry, Russian Airborne Troops, Strategic Missile Troops (for a second year in a row), Russian Aerospace Defense Forces, the Federal Security Service (FSB, formerly the KGB), Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and units from the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

All the marching troops saluted in the direction of Putin, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Serdyukov, and Russian military brass.

The parade echoed images of the Cold War, as Russian T-90 tanks, MSTA-S howitzer SP mounts, armored reconnaissance “Tiger” GAZ-233 014 vehicles, Buk-2M2 self-propelled missile systems, S-400 surface-to-air missile system transporters, and Topol-M ground missile complex launchers mounted with intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) followed the marching troops down Red Square.

The parading vehicles could be seen with red stars along their side. Mi-8 helicopters carrying suspended military flags also flew overhead at the close of the parade. A full video of the Victory Day parade can be seen [here](#).

Photo: Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system transporters roll down the Red Square, in Moscow, Russia, May 9, 2012, during the Victory Day Parade, which commemorates the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany: AP Images



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