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State Defense Council

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State Defense Council

The Russian Federation's State Defense Council was established by President Boris Yeltsin on July 25, 1996. Led by Yeltsin's National Security Affairs Assistant, Yuri Baturin, the council was charged with comprehensively implementing military reform. It held its first meeting on October 4, 1996. A key Council objective included reducing the Russian military's size to 1.2 million personnel; creating a smaller, more flexible, and highly mobile military force; enhancing Russian military professionalism; and formulating new military doctrine.

Participating council entities included the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and several other ministries including the Border Guards. It met monthly during the Yeltsin years; its operating style was somewhat comparable to the U.S. National Security Council but with a narrower mandate, and had a staff of approximately 53 members consisting primarily of Foreign Ministry civilians and military officers. It also tapped external expertise, commissioned outside studies, and achieved modest success in pushing for military reform during the Yeltsin era.

However, the Council quarreled with the Defense Ministry and would lose power to the Security Council of the Russian Federation (SCRF) during the Putin and Medvedev presidencies. A Military Industrial Commission was created on March 20, 2006 to centralize and reform military-industrial complex operational

management. Various laws have enhanced SCIRF's power and authority in recent years, and it is now the preeminent power in Russian national security policymaking. The State Defense Council became an example of agency that had a brief time in the sun before losing out to political infighting, military opposition to its reform efforts, bureaucratic maneuvering and power plays, and the deeply ingrained authoritarian and centralized tendencies in Russian political and military policymaking.

Bert Chapman

See also: Putin, Vladimir V. (1952-); Yeltsin, Boris Nikolaevich (1931-2007)

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