

Artillery upgrades are needed as well. The venerable D-30 122mm towed howitzer was to be completely withdrawn by the end of 2013, but has not been for lack of a replacement. It may be that the 120mm 2S9 Nona-S mortar/gun will continue in service with the regiments, while the more-modern tracked 2S31 Vena may augment these and the divisional artillery regiments incrementally. A new towed 120mm mortar, the 2B23, may also be deployed in the air assault brigades. Apart from the previously mentioned 2S25-Sprut SD, both the regimental and divisional anti-tank units may see a qualitative increase with the fielding of the most advanced anti-tank guided weapons (for example, AT-13 Saxhorn-2 – Metis-M; or AT-14 Spriggan – Kornet) on existing BTR-RD anti-tank vehicles, replacing the much older and inferior AT-4s and AT-5s currently in use. Whether or not the ultra-potent AT-15 Springer (Khrizantema) is deployed with the VDV remains to be seen.

Air defence has seen an incremental improvement with the testing and fielding of the Verba man-portable air-defence system (MANPAD).²⁷ However, what is sorely needed is a cutting-edge replacement for the SA-13 (Strela-10M3) surface-to-air missile (SAM) in the divisional air-defence battalions. Here there may be a solution in the offing. Evidently, an advanced version of the Pantsir-S1 (SA-22 Greyhound) is in the works, able to engage any type of aerial target, including those with smaller radar cross-sections and UAVs. In addition, a tracked and more manoeuvrable version of the Pantsir-S1 system is anticipated for both ground and airborne troops – the current prototype of which utilises the GM-352 chassis.



Pantsir-S1 mounted on a tracked GM-352 chassis.

Fielding of this next-generation Pantsir system is to be completed in 2017, and is claimed to be far superior in technical characteristics to the existing system. Another version, called the Pantsir-SM, will not only be able to intercept UAVs but be adapted to operate in arctic climates.²⁸ It is also claimed to have a new missile that extends the system's current engagement range from 20 kilometres (12 miles) to 30 kilometres (19 miles). The Pantsir-SM is to enter service in late 2014.

²⁷ RIA Novosti, 2014. Russian paratroopers receive newest shoulder-fired missiles, *RIA Novosti*, [online] 30 May. Available at: http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20140530/190242026/Russian-Paratroopers-Receive-Newest-Verba-Shoulder-Fired.html.

²⁸ Army Recognition. *Russian Army to get new upgraded version of Pantsir-S1 air defense missile system Pantsir-SM*. [online] Available at: http://www.armyrecognition.com/april_2014_global_defense_security_news_uk/russian_army_to_get_new_version_of_pantsir-s1_air_defense_missile_system_pantsir-sm_2904142.html.