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It is vital for Russian troops to wipe out West-supplied rocket launchers, says expert

The M270 MLRS and M142 HIMARS are the most dangerous and capable weapons available to the Ukrainian armed forces that can influence combat operations, Alexey Sakantsev noted

M142 HIMARS rocket system

MOSCOW, June 6. /TASS/. M270 and M142 HIMARS rocket systems that the West is suppling to Ukraine under a new military aid package are the most formidable weapons of all the armaments handed over to Kiev before but Russian forces are capable of destroying them, missile and artillery troops reserve officer, army veteran Alexey Sakantsev told TASS on Monday.

"Of all possible armaments supplied by the collective West, the M270 MLRS [multiple launch rocket system] and M142 HIMARS [High Mobility Artillery Rocket System] are the most dangerous and capable weapons available to the Ukrainian armed forces that can influence combat operations," the expert pointed out.

UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace announced in early June that London would send Kiev M270 rocket systems with munitions capable of striking targets at a distance of up to 80 km. The decision was synchronized with the delivery of US M142 HIMARS systems and ammunition to Kiev. The US administration earlier said that the first batch would include four rocket systems while the strike range of a light wheeled HIMARS that would be handed over to Kiev would not exceed 80 km.

Formidable weapons

The British M270 and the US M142 rocket systems fire same-type munitions, with the only difference being that the M270 is a tracked vehicle with two packs of 6 rockets each (or one missile) while the M142 HIMARS is a wheeled launcher (mounted on the chassis of a five-tonne truck with an armored cabin) with a pack of 6 rockets or a missile, he explained.

"These packs are outfitted with quick-reloading systems and structurally almost do not differ from each other, like their fire control systems, while standard modules are a great advantage for logistics, training and equipment repairs," Sakantsev pointed out.

Western multiple launch rocket systems are also distinguished by a variety of ammunition rounds. As the expert told TASS, both systems use three types of ammunition: 227mm and 240mm rocket-propelled shells with a broad range of warheads, from conventional high explosive fragmentation rounds to cluster munitions of several types (capable of striking both armor and manpower).

These systems can also fire rockets that deliver an array of mines to the target: these rocket-propelled shells can strike at a range of 45 km to 70 km depending on the munition subtype, he explained.

"Importantly, some of them are guided munitions and are adjusted by GPS (NAVSTAR). Consequently, these shells feature low circular error probability and, therefore, require no adjustment fire: the target will be hit suddenly and accurately and, in case of cluster munitions, massively," the expert elaborated.

The third type of munitions for the M270 and M142 rocket launchers is designated as MGM-140 ATACMS, which is a tactical missile, the officer said.

"Let me just mention again that the M270 launcher can carry two such missiles and the M142 system carries one. This missile also has several modifications that differ in terms of their warheads and, basically, in terms of the flight range that varies between 140 km and 300 km. These missiles are also guided munitions (the GPS-adjusted inertial system) and feature low circular error probability and frequently carry a cluster warhead," Sakantsev said.

These rocket systems make it possible to strike targets both near the frontline and in the enemy rear, he said.

"If the Ukrainian armed forces get the longest-range rockets, they will be able to shell some Russian aerodromes, military bases and a lot of ammunition depots, command posts and troop amassment areas, and also air defense systems and artillery even not at positions but at the

places of their maintenance, transportation and preparation," the expert stressed.

As its other advantage, the US M142 HIMARS launcher is highly mobile thanks to its wheeled platform and can be disguised as a truck that will complicate its detection and destruction, he said.

Countering Western rocket launchers

Russia can fight these Western rocket launchers with its missile systems, the expert pointed out.

"All the munitions of these systems can be detected in flight and destroyed by the Russian advanced air defense systems like the S-300, S-350, S-400, Buk, Tor-M2, Pantsyr-S and Tunguska that are operational in the troops and are involved in the special military operation," he said.

However, the Russian air and anti-missile defenses should be organized properly to strike US munitions as rockets and missiles are more dangerous and complex targets than aircraft, he stressed.

It is practically unrealistic to jam rockets of M270 and M142 systems that are guided by the GPS signal, the expert said.

"This may be done theoretically and technically but not practically. This is because the signal will have to be ‘suppressed’ along the rocket’s entire flight path while a part of this course extends over enemy territory and it is almost unrealistic to jam the rocket’s path over friendly territory just based only on energy," the expert pointed out.

The M270 and M142 rocket systems are effective weapons and require serious training to fight them, he said.

"To my mind, it is vitally necessary to destroy such systems at their stationing places before they move into firing positions and the Russian Aerospace Forces are capable of fulfilling this task. In some cases, this task can be fulfilled by Iskander-M systems and what’s more, without a

risk for pilots," Sakantsev stressed, adding that Russia needed to further develop its air defenses. All these measures will deprive the enemy of the capability to deliver critical strikes, the expert emphasized.

Foreign MLRS

The M142 HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) is a highly mobile multiple launch rocket system developed by the US-based Lockheed Martin. The launcher with six tubes of 227mm rockets or one ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile System) ballistic missile is mounted on a five-tonne six-wheel chassis of FMTV (Family of Medium Tactical Vehicle) transporters.

The launcher fires over 20 types of munitions with a strike range of 30 km to 80 km (for rockets) and 300 km and more (for a tactical missile). The system has been accepted for service in some countries, including the United States, Singapore, the UAE, Canada, Poland, Romania and Jordan.

The M270 MLRS has also been developed by the US-based Lockheed Martin. The launcher is mounted on the US Bradley tracked platform and fires about 20 types of munitions. It can strike targets at a range of 32 km to 500 km. The system is in service with the armies of 17 countries.

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