

What Did the Vietnam Defense Minister's Russia Visit Accomplish?

A closer look at the significance of a recent trip.

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April 10, 2018



Last week, Vietnamese Defense Minister Ngo Xuan Lich paid a visit to Russia. While the interaction was just the latest in a series of defense-related interactions we have seen this year, it is worth examining the significance of the trip within the broader context of the Russia-Vietnam defense relationship.

As I have noted in these pages, Russia and Vietnam have a defense relationship that dates back to the Cold War and continues today as Hanoi modernizes its military and Moscow seeks a stronger and more visible defense presence in the broader Asia-Pacific under Vladimir Putin, who unsurprisingly won the recent Russian elections in March. That has continued into 2018 with a series of defense-related interactions, including Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu's visit to Vietnam in January.

As I observed last week, Lich's visit included several engagements, including his attendance at the seventh Moscow Conference on International Security April 4-5, an annual dialogue launched by the Russian defense ministry back in 2012, as well as meetings on the sidelines with Russian officials touching on the defense relationship as well as other visiting delegations (See: "[Russia-Vietnam Military Ties in the Spotlight](#)").

As expected, Lich's visit saw both sides review their ongoing defense collaboration and discuss future opportunities. According to official Vietnamese accounts, Lich's meeting with Shoigu saw the two countries discuss opportunities in areas such as exchanges, training, naval cooperation, and military technology collaboration. Both sides inked a roadmap for their bilateral defense cooperation from 2018 out to 2020 as part of the routine review of their collaboration.

Lich also previewed upcoming engagements between the two sides. For instance, he announced that Vietnam would send its delegates to the Military Technical Forum and a military sports team to the International Army Games 2018, which Russia is hosting. As with his current visit, such engagements often provide the two sides with opportunities to review their bilateral defense cooperation and make further inroads.

Beyond bilateral defense ties, Lich's visit also afforded him the opportunity to express Vietnam's own broader views of the regional security environment. Lich's address at the Moscow Conference on International Security, delivered during the conference's forth plenary session, focused on multilateral mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific as a means to respond to a range of security challenges and threats.

Unsurprisingly, he also used his address to touch on Vietnam's contributions to regional security on issues like peacekeeping as well as to preview Hanoi's upcoming chairmanship of ASEAN in 2020. That year will also mark the 10th anniversary of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), which also includes Russia.



Image Credit: [Facebook/ Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation](#)