



# Constructing the Temple of Victory for the Russian Armed Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** With the official inauguration of the Russian Armed Forces' new cathedral less than six months away (9 May 2020), the construction pace at Patriot Park has gone into overdrive. In a recent and detailed article, a reporter from the liberal weekly *Novaya Gazeta* visited the building site and described the immense scale and pace, the projected cost, the construction challenges, as well as some of the unique characteristics of what is now being termed "the Temple of Victory." The article begins by pointing out that construction only began "on September 19, 2018, [when] President Vladimir Putin, Minister of Defense Sergey Shoigu, and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill took part in the blessing ceremony for the foundation stone." Since then, construction has been non-stop, with "a thousand workers working on the territory," building what "will become the third highest of all Orthodox churches in the world."



Visit by President Putin and Defense Minister Shoigu to examine a model of the Main Temple of the Armed Forces in Patriot Park, 19 September 2018.  
Source: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58595/photos>, CC-BY 4.0

Since the cathedral commemorates those who died in the "Great Patriotic War" (WW II), the builders have incorporated a number of important military symbols into the project. For instance, the road that connects the sites on the complex is "about 1.5 kilometers," which corresponds to "1418 steps - the number of days and nights of the war." The article also briefly examines the funding for this project, pointing out that besides the voluntary contributions (approximately 3 billion rubles or \$47 million), many Russian companies are providing free materials and equipment. While the final cost for the project is still unknown, one source quoted in the article suggests that it "may cost about 6-8 billion rubles (approximately \$100 million) due to the expensive interior decoration."

The article addresses the high maintenance costs for this new project and questions the rationale in building such a huge cathedral (it will accommodate over six thousand parishioners) given its "location and difficult transport accessibility." Patriot Park is located some 40 miles outside of Moscow, and one expert quoted said that the new church "will be empty almost all the time." The article quotes a Russian religious scholar who claims that the militaristic design of this new edifice is "radically different... from the tradition of Orthodox churches," and that "it seems more of a 'temple to Mars, and not Christ.'" The construction spokesperson replied, however, that "all descendants of the Great Patriotic War will want to become visitors," and that the new cathedral will ensure "that the memory of that victory will be preserved from generation to generation." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***"...We are building a temple to commemorate the victory in World War II, so that the memory of that victory will be preserved from generation to generation..."***

**Source:** Alexandra Georgievich, "Торжество военного православия (The triumph of military Orthodoxy)," *Novaya Gazeta*, 30 September 2019. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2019/09/30/82141-hram-minoborony>

May 9, 2020, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, the main temple of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation or, as it is also called, the Temple of Victory, will be inaugurated in the Patriot Park near Moscow. It will become the third highest of all Orthodox churches in the world... The *Novaya Gazeta* special correspondent went to Patriot Park to see how the construction is going, talked with Deputy Minister of Defense Timur Ivanov and found out how much the triumph of military Orthodoxy would cost.

...From afar, it seems even small, but then the look falls on temporary buildings, construction waste, trucks, people, and it becomes clear that the building is simply huge.

...On September 19, 2018, President Vladimir Putin, Minister of Defense Sergey Shoigu, and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill took part in the blessing ceremony for the foundation stone of the Russian Armed Forces church in Patriot Park, not far from Kubinka, Moscow Region.... In September 2019, a thousand workers working on the territory and more than a hundred units of equipment are involved: cranes, concrete pumps, loaders...

...Bricks (1,100,000 pieces) as a voluntary donation was provided by the Kalashnikov concern.

Donations to the temple can be made in six different ways. One of them is assistance with construction equipment and materials.... According to the assurance of military builders, the concern is actively helping in the construction, but it provides materials, not cash. Indeed, you can donate not only money. On the website of the Resurrection Fund, it is indicated that all, whether individuals or legal entities, can make a donation in six different ways, including the item "construction equipment and materials." Many companies prefer to do just that.

...In summer, military builders began landscaping near the cathedral, laying external engineering networks, erecting two buildings: a multifunctional training center and the circular memorial gallery 'Memory Road' - a special pride of military builders. Its length will be about 1.5 kilometers, the main territory of the museum is marked out at 1418 steps - according to the number of days and nights of the war....

..."Yes, indeed, donations from individuals and organizations are approaching a figure of 3 billion rubles, to be precise, the amount has been collected 2,992,051,908 rubles 54 kopecks," Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Timur Ivanov told *Novaya Gazeta*.... The temple of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation may cost about 6-8 billion rubles due to expensive interior decoration.

...According to the source, the project size involves attending divine services on average by about six thousand parishioners. Given the location and difficult transport accessibility, the temple of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation will be empty almost all the time.

...Timur Ivanov is convinced that at least once in his life, everyone will want to visit the temple of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, and taking into account the museum complex "Memory Road," all descendants of the Great Patriotic War will want to become visitors.... "We are building a temple to commemorate the victory in World War II, so that the memory of that victory will be preserved from generation to generation," he told *Novaya Gazeta*.

...Religious scholar Alexander Soldatov notes that this edifice is radically different both from his own ideas about Christianity, and from the tradition of designing Orthodox churches. "It seems that it will be some kind of temple of Mars, not Christ, figuratively speaking," he said.