



Elimination of Dedovshchina (Hazing in the Russian Military)?

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past several years, the reputation of Russia's military has improved dramatically. Despite this more favorable image, however, a large number of young Russian men still remain reluctant to complete their one-year term of obligatory conscript service. One of the primary reasons behind their unwillingness stems from a tradition of vicious hazing (дедовщина/dedovshchina) within the ranks. During the past decade, to reduce hazing, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) has enacted various prophylactic policies (e.g. reduce term of service, daily physical inspections, a confidential hotline, etc.). This may now be changing. Or not.

Quoting a recent announcement by Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kartapolov, the first accompanying excerpt from the official news agency, *RIA Novosti* states that “the Russian army has completely eradicated hazing and barracks hooliganism.” Kartapolov goes on to assert that some of this positive change is due to “the quality of conscription and the desire of Russian citizens to do military service in the ranks of the Armed Forces.” His comments are echoed by “Colonel-General Sergei Kuralenko, head of the Main Directorate of the Military Police of the Ministry of Defense,” who “noted that positive results were achieved thanks to the well-coordinated work of all relevant departments.”

Not surprisingly, not all Russians share this optimistic assessment regarding the elimination of hazing. The second excerpt, from the pro-Kremlin source, *Izvestiya*, quotes a representative from the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, who explains that while there may be “less cruelty and torture in the army... they have not been eradicated.” This source asserts that, every day, their committee “receives dozens of calls and letters on completely different situations. Somewhere soldiers are beat up, somewhere they extort money, somewhere they get injured.” The source goes on to claim that “extortion of money prevails in the army, extortion is total left and right.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Head of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrey_Kartapolov,_2018.jpg
mil.ru CCA 4.0 Intl

Source: “Минобороны заявило о полном искоренении дедовщины,” [The Ministry of Defense announced the complete eradication of bullying] *RIA Novosti*, 26 August 2020. <https://ria.ru/20200826/armiya-1576316232.html>

The Russian army has completely eradicated hazing and barracks hooliganism, Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kartapolov said at a roundtable at the Army-2020 forum.

...According to the general, this, in turn, “influenced the quality of conscription and the desire of Russian citizens to do military service in the ranks of the Armed Forces.”

Colonel-General Sergei Kuralenko, head of the Main Directorate of the Military Police of the Ministry of Defense, noted that positive results were achieved thanks to the well-coordinated work of all relevant departments.

Source: “Солдатские матери не согласились с заявлением о победе над дедовщиной в армии,” [Soldiers' mothers disagree with declaration of victory over bullying in the army] *Izvestiya*, 26 August 2020. <https://iz.ru/1052924/2020-08-26/soldatskie-materi-ne-soglasilis-s-zaiavleniem-o-pobede-nad-dedovshchinoi-v-armii>

The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers does not agree with the statements of the Ministry of Defense on the eradication of bullying in the army. This was reported to Izvestia by Andrey Kurochkin, deputy chairman of the all-Russian public organization Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, on August 26.

“There is less cruelty and torture in the army, although they still exist. Just now extortion of money prevails in the army, extortion is total left and right. But there is less torture and cruelty, but they have not been eradicated, we do not agree with that,” said Kurochkin.

According to him, every day the committee receives dozens of calls and letters on completely different situations. “Somewhere soldiers are beat, somewhere they extort money, somewhere they get injured...” the deputy chairman of the committee said...