



Social Media Restrictions for Russian Security

OE Watch Commentary: In light of a number of embarrassing digital revelations over the past several years, Russian defense and security structures have adopted measures to restrict uniformed and civilian personnel from using social media. The first accompanying excerpt from the main Russian government newspaper, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, describes proposed legislation which would “prohibit service personnel from posting too much information on social media.” This legislation apparently codifies a military ban which was enacted in mid-2014 after various journalists and investigators uncovered digital evidence of Russian military involvement in Ukraine. The article goes on to point out that “everything connected with a guy’s service comes under the ban.” Those who fail to comply can expect “harsh punishments...right down to dismissal from the service.”

The second excerpt from the pro-Kremlin, *Izvestiya*, describes digital screening measures enacted by the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) to weed out those prospective civilian personnel who may have inadvertently posted compromising information on social media. According to the article, to apply for a civilian position within the MoD, applicants must now “supply internet portal addresses where he has posted information over the past 3 years enabling his identity to be established.” Depending upon what the applicant has posted on social media, “will influence the decision on his recruitment for work or the cadre reserve.” This article quotes an expert who insists that “the information on state employees’ virtual contacts is necessary for the safekeeping of military secrets.” Moreover, as the article points out, a future staffer’s “indiscreet conduct on the Net can cast a shadow over the department.”

The Kremlin leadership has a long history in attempting to control the flow of information. While the public Russian internet remains largely open and uncensored, recent legislation suggests that those who are employed by the various security structures (or plan to be employed) should avoid any and all social media platforms. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“The Internet and soldiers’ private blogs have become an invaluable source of information for special services -- as a result of the indiscipline of certain bloggers in uniform. We have to combat this.”

Source: Vladislav Kulikov, “Разжалуют в блогеры: За селфи на службе военных будут увольнять, (Demotion to Blogger: Military to be Dismissed for Taking Selfies on Duty),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 20 August 2018. <https://rg.ru/2018/08/20/voennyh-budut-uvolniet-za-selfi-na-sluzhbe.html>

On 20 August a government commission on drafting legislation examined a bill to prohibit service personnel from posting too much information on social media.

Everything connected with a guy’s service comes under the ban: who he is (in the sense of the number of stars on his epaulets), where he is at that precise moment, what kind of tank he is riding, and so forth. He cannot post photos or videos from his service locations, geographical location data, etc. Group photos against the backdrop of military equipment, pictures of his friends on active assignments, etc. are all prohibited.

Harsh punishments lie in store for those who are careless on social media. Right down to dismissal from the service.... The Internet and soldiers’ private blogs have become an invaluable source of information for special services -- as a result of the indiscipline of certain bloggers in uniform. We have to combat this....

Source: Aleksey Kozachenko and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Виртуальные связи: При поступлении на госслужбу в Минобороны нужно будет предоставить информацию об аккаунтах в Сети (Virtual Ties. During Entry into State Service with Defense Ministry It will be Necessary to Provide Information on Net Accounts),” *Izvestiya*, 21 September 2018. <https://iz.ru/787518/aleksei-kozachenko-bogdan-stepovoi/virtualnye-svazi>

A competition using a new method will be held for candidates for state service with the Defense Ministry. The candidate will have to supply internet portal addresses where he has posted information over the past 3 years enabling his identity to be established. This is not just a question of social networks but also of job sites and thematic forums. The content of Net accounts will influence the decision on his recruitment for work or the cadre reserve.

...At the Defense Ministry Izvestiya was told that the department has prepared a draft order “On Approval of the Single Method for Holding Competitions for the Filling of Vacant Posts in the State Civilian Service of the Russian Federation and for Inclusion in the Russian Federation Defense Ministry Cadre Reserve.”

...As the draft that Izvestiya has acquainted itself with says, the recruitment of state employees to the Defense Ministry will be conducted, as now, on a competitive basis. But in addition to a standard set of documents, the candidate will have to supply the internet portal addresses where he has posted “publicly accessible information and also data making it possible to establish his identity” over the past 3 years. This is not only a question of social network pages but also job sites and even thematic forums....

...As Izvestiya has written, according to article 20.2 of the law “On State Civilian Service” (79-FZ) officials are obliged to report the social networks and forums they participate in and under what names. The main aim of this requirement is “the ensuring of the observance by civilian employees of the rules of professional ethics.”

The information on state employees’ virtual contacts is necessary for the safekeeping of military secrets, German Klimenko, Chairman of the Council of the Foundation for the Development of the Digital Economy, believes. “The Defense Ministry as an employer possessing secret information must ensure its safekeeping,” he told Izvestiya. “Like China, we have no virtual borders. Someone can be recruited using the internet. The military department must understand whom it is hiring for work, where, and with whom its potential staffer makes contact and how.

Indiscreet conduct on the Net can cast a shadow over the department, Aleksandr Perendzhiyev, senior lecturer of the Russian Economics University named for Plekhanov and a member of the Officers of Russia Expert Council, added. “A Defense Ministry employee must observe the virtual culture and decency,” the expert noted. “We know of instances when ambiguous photographs or comments have led to scandals....”