



Consolidating Naval Training at Kronshtadt?

OE Watch Commentary: In what was labeled as a cost-saving measure, former Russian Minister of Defense, Anatoly Serdyukov announced plans to transfer naval training facilities in St. Petersburg and consolidate them in nearby Kronshtadt. However, due to objections from within the military and the projected price of the proposed move, these plans were later scrapped. A decade later, as the accompanying excerpt from the largely independent news source *Versiya* describes, these plans are being reconsidered.

After examining the background of the previous plan, the author reviews the current disposition of naval education institutes in St. Petersburg. He points out that “according to the military, the spread of naval universities in the northern capital today not only hinders the educational process at the proper level, but constantly requires large costs for the maintenance of real estate.” While on paper, it might make sense to transfer these naval institutes and consolidate them in Kronshtadt, the author quotes other experts who argue that such a move will actually be more expensive in the long run. He points out that the military is using the previous cost estimate to move the training facilities (100 billion rubles or approximately \$145 million) and that this amount will likely be insufficient today. He also claims that such a move “may significantly diminish the quality of the sailors’ education,” pointing out that this occurred with pilot training when the Zhukovskiy and Gagarin Air Force Academy was moved from Moscow to Voronezh. The author goes on to explain that there is currently inadequate housing and other infrastructure (e.g. “heating and water supply”) to accommodate moving the naval training facilities and personnel to Kronshtadt.

The author concludes by suggesting that the driving factor behind this proposed move, despite the serious obstacles, is simply economic: “It looks like money, as usual.” Vacating the naval schools in the “prestigious areas of Saint Petersburg and their sale will bring huge profits, which could “open up great opportunities for corruption.” For those who know their Russian history (e.g. the Kronshtadt rebellion in 1921) consolidating Russian naval training within Kronshtadt - without adequate infrastructure - proved to be highly problematic in the past. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“All naval schools are located in prestigious areas of Saint Petersburg and their sale will bring huge profits.”



Map of Kronshtadt.

Source: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dateli:Map_of_Kronstadt_bay.png CC-BY 2.0.

Source: Aleksandr Stepanov, “Переезд на сто миллиардов: Сергей Шойгу встал на путь Анатолия Сердюкова? (Move Costing 100 Billion; Has Sergey Shoygu Taken the Path of Anatoliy Serdyukov?),” *Versiya*, 27 August 2018. <https://versia.ru/sergej-shoigu-vstal-na-put-anatoliya-serdyukova>

At the end of July, the Defense Ministry decided to create a super-modern military town in Kronshtadt to which all of Saint Petersburg’s naval educational institutions will be transferred. Such an initiative was made previously by Anatoly Serdyukov, but because of the cost of the project, estimated at more than 100 billion rubles, the scheme was abandoned. And now the Defense Ministry has remembered the old plan.

What is behind it, the desire to create a training base for sailors or a wish to assimilate budget monies and get their hands on expensive real estate in the center of Saint Petersburg?

...According to the military, the spread of naval universities in the northern capital today not only hinders the educational process at the proper level, but constantly requires large costs for the maintenance of real estate....

...In addition, according to experts, no savings will emerge in the end. On the contrary, the resettlement operation will lead to the budget losing several billion. After all, a lot of money will be needed to create and equip the base for a new university. By the way, 100 billion rubles is still the previous cost of the project. We must assume that in 10 years that could multiply. But most importantly, as a result of the relocation of the universities, the quality of the sailors’ education may significantly diminish. Unfortunately, this is not even an assumption – there are already examples of this.

Schemes for the relocation of the military schools from the prestigious real estate of the capital cities were first worked out directly under Anatoly Serdyukov. The very first was the controversial transfer from Moscow to Voronezh of the Air Force Academy imeni Zhukovskiy and Gagarin. Then there was also talk about savings and improving the quality of pilot training. However, it turned out differently; most of the senior lecturers did not want to move to the periphery, where there were no conditions for normal service or housing. As a result, almost no one moved from the decades-old faculty in Moscow to the new place of service and work....

...Apparently, that history will now repeat itself. It is still unclear where the families of lecturers facing resettlement from Saint Petersburg will be placed. Military officials believe that Kronshtadt can comfortably accommodate more than 30,000 students and teaching staff with families. However, almost half of the housing stock on the island consists of communal apartments.... The conditions there are unacceptable - rotten floors and falling ceilings, problems with heating and water supply. It is hardly to be expected that many lecturers will agree to such a move....

...So what is the matter then? It looks like the money, as usual. After the sailors move, there will remain the empty buildings of military schools in Saint Petersburg.... All naval schools are located in prestigious areas of Saint Petersburg and their sale will bring huge profits. The cost of all the buildings in which the Saint Petersburg naval universities are located, according to the most approximate estimates, is several billion rubles. At the same time, the concept of ‘market price’ is so elastic that it opens up great opportunities for corruption.