



## Constructing Military Ideology... and a Military Church

**OE Watch Commentary:** Even though the Russian constitution states that “no ideology may be established as state or obligatory,” the Kremlin continues to search for a unifying set of beliefs. The accompanying excerpt from the country’s primary military newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, suggests that the current Kremlin leadership may be leaning toward the former tsarist ideology “За веру, царя и Отечество (for the faith, tsar and fatherland).” The article quotes Colonel General Kartapolov, who was recently appointed as Deputy Defense Minister and Chief of the Armed Forces Main Military-Political Directorate. According to the article, “Kartapolov is convinced that the modern Russian serviceman cannot be shaped without shaping lofty spirituality in him,” and that this ideology “will be based on knowledge of the history of our Motherland and people and on historical and cultural traditions.”



Artist image of the main cathedral of the Russian Armed Forces.

Source: <http://eng.hram.mil.ru/> CCA-4.0.

To help with shaping this “lofty spirituality,” General Kartapolov described plans for the construction of the “Main Church of the Armed Forces, whose construction will commence in the very near future in the Patriot Park near Moscow.” He pointed out that this “new church will be one more example of the people’s unity around the idea of patriotism, love, and devotion to our Motherland.”

The accompanying excerpt from the centrist daily, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, provides some additional details about this new military church. If all goes according to plan, this military house of worship (which will hold 6,000 people and stand 95 meters tall) will hopefully be completed by 9 May 2020, which is the “75th anniversary of the Victory” in the Great Patriotic War. The article points out that the façade of the church will be in the same color as “Russian missile systems and armored vehicles... [and] creates the illusion of the church’s similarity with a giant rocket complex.” (For a fuller picture, see the church’s website: <http://hram.mil.ru/>) The inside of the church will be “decorated with paintings with battle scenes from military history and texts from the Holy Scriptures.” The article also points out that this new religious complex will be used as “a center for the training of military clergy.”

During the Soviet period, communism served as the ideological basis for the armed forces. Having been largely discredited, the Russian political and military leadership now appear to be drawing on more traditional beliefs in constructing a new ideology for the country’s armed forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“Andrey Kartapolov is convinced that the modern Russian serviceman cannot be shaped without shaping lofty spirituality in him.”*

**Source:** Mariya Tomilenko, “Крепить дух воинства (To Strengthen the Army’s Spirit),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 7 September 2018. [redstar.ru/krepit-duh-voinstva/](http://redstar.ru/krepit-duh-voinstva/)

*In a meeting with journalists on 5 September Colonel General Andrey Kartapolov, Russian Federation Deputy Defense Minister and Chief of the Armed Forces Main Military-Political Directorate, spoke about the tasks, structure, stages of formation, and work principles of military-political organs...*

*The need for information protection of the Armed Forces’ personnel and the need to shape in them the steadfast conviction of the importance of serving the Fatherland on the traditional principles of Russian society is one of the main reasons why this decision to create military-political organs was adopted...*

*...During the conversation the talk also turned to the distinguishing qualities of the soldier of the future. Andrey Kartapolov is convinced that the modern Russian serviceman cannot be shaped without shaping lofty spirituality in him. Speaking about ideology, the deputy head of the military department pointed out that this will be based on knowledge of the history of our Motherland and people and on historical and cultural traditions.*

*Another topic of frank discussion was the role of the military clergy in the present Russian Army. Andrey Kartapolov reported that the Military Clergy Training Center will function under the Main Church of the Armed Forces, whose construction will commence in the very near future in the Patriot Park near Moscow. ...He pointed out that the new church will be one more example of the people’s unity around the idea of patriotism, love, and devotion to our Motherland.*

**Source:** Arthur Priymak, “Главный храм Минобороны замаскирован от небес (The main church of the Ministry of Defense is disguised from heaven),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 9 September 2018. [http://www.ng.ru/faith/2018-09-05/2\\_7304\\_armyhram.html](http://www.ng.ru/faith/2018-09-05/2_7304_armyhram.html)

*By 9 May 2020, the 75th anniversary of the Victory, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation will have its main church, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said. The place for the church is located 63 km from Moscow, not far from Kubinka, and the military patriotic park...*

*The main church of the Russian Armed Forces is already labeled the “khaki church” on the Internet.... the walls of the military church are really made in the color of the standard Russian missile system and armored vehicle... From the inside, the walls are decorated with paintings with battle scenes from military history and texts from the Holy Scriptures. The projected height is 95m and is designed for 6 thousand people... is 95 m. The style of the future church is the eclectic of the so-called Russian style with Byzantine. The architecture creates the illusion of the church’s similarity with a giant rocket complex.” ...The church complex will be the center for the training of military clergy.*