



## Birthrate Soars Among Service Families in the Arctic

**OE Watch Commentary:** One of the consequences of the increase of contract service personnel in the Russian Armed Forces is the increase in the number of service families and the accompanying excerpted article from *Red Star* takes a look at this. Russian garrison communities are not known for an overabundance of family-friendly facilities and this holds true particularly in the Arctic. Admiral Yevmenov, who commands the Northern Operational Strategic Command, has ground forces, aerospace forces (air force, air defense and space), Spetsnaz as well as a naval fleet. This is a lot of personnel, equipment and territory to worry about. The Admiral is also worried about living conditions for the families of personnel and interaction with the Arctic communities. As the article notes, the Admiral has been looking into kindergartens, schools, day care, jobs for wives, shopping centers, leisure and recreation facilities, roads, public transportation and medical care, and he is involving the local authorities as partners in the planning and solutions. One of the problem areas not discussed in the article is family housing—which is a problem since the military provides barracks and family housing—and is in short supply in much of the Arctic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



*“Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, commander of the Northern Fleet, held a conference call on social support for servicemen and their families at the fleet’s bases. Urgent problems were discussed in the fleet staff with the participation of the governor and ministers of Murmansk Oblast. Formation commanders, task force commanders, and the leaders of municipalities reported on their situations through video-conferencing.”*

**Source:** Olga Vorobyeva, “Seeking the proper approach with Local Authorities: The Creation of Comfortable living Conditions for Northerners Is a Priority Concern of the Fleet Command”, *Красная Звезда [Red Star]*, 25 January 2018. <http://www.redstar.ru>

*The format of the meeting immediately brought the conversation round to a consideration of the problems in each specific garrison. The participation of Marina Kovtun, governor of Murmanskaya Oblast’, Sergey Dubovoy, chairman of the Murmanskaya Oblast’ Duma, Andrey Sysoyev, head of the administration of Murmansk, and a number of ministers of the governments of Murmanskaya and Arkhangel’skaya oblast’s and also of the leadership of closed administrative and territorial formations and municipalities permitted submission of proposals for change on the spot.*

*Admiral Nikolay Yevmenov noted that many social issues of significance for the servicemen and their families are being resolved positively thanks to joint efforts with the local governments... The problem of provision of the servicemen’s children with kindergartens has been completely resolved in Arkhangel’sk, Severodvinsk, Nar’yan-Mar, Murmansk, Zaozersk, Monchegorsk, Olenegorsk, Vidyayev, and Severomorsk-3... The Admiral noted that “The commanding officer is responsible not only for the servicemen but also for the conditions under which their families live, to the extent which the children are provided with schools and kindergartens, employment of the wives, medical treatment of family members, and much else.” Our professional duty is not only to fulfill our missions but also to resolve the social problems which the men encounter.”*

*The remote garrisons of Alakurtti, Pechenga, and Sputnik [garrisons of the 80th Arctic Motorized Rifle Brigade, 66th Naval Infantry Brigade, and 200th Coastal Defense Motorized Rifle Brigade] are in need of greater-than-usual attention....*

*“I would like to live here, and now, what is more, not postpone this until tomorrow,” the fleet commander expressed his principled position. “Every effort to provide people with comfortable conditions needs to be made, therefore.”*

*Garrisons differ, but the problems are similar.... An increase in day-care centers is needed, the cultural and leisure institutions need updating. There are difficulties with public transport.... Admiral Nikolay Yevmenov emphasized that no money should be spared in improving the lives of the citizens of our country, and servicemen are citizens. Residents of the “outback” also complain about the lack of chain stores with a wide selection and affordable prices.... The shortage of doctors is a problem of many northern regions. The twice annual “Health Train” for all localities of Murmanskaya Oblast’ was a big help. As far as regular doctors are concerned, there is still a problem. Specialists are reluctant to go to the peripheral regions since there are no financial incentives. The latest data show that Murmanskaya Oblast’ needs 638 doctors, Arkhangel’skaya, 890. An Arctic Doctor proposal is being considered....*

*Pothole repair does not resolve the problem of the roads and....restoration of the entire road bed to the remote Severomorsk-3 airmen’s garrison is required.*

*Among the problems requiring a joint solution with the local leaders ...is the instruction of children in schools in a single shift, provision of places in kindergarten, particularly in day-care centers, and the construction of playgrounds and sports fields.... A kindergarten opened at the end of last year in the Sputnik naval infantry garrison and a school is nearing completion in Severomorsk-3... Considering that the birthrate in the six garrisons has risen noticeably, the need for children’s preschool institutions is entirely justified.*

*The commander tasked the garrison’s senior officers with immersing themselves in social issues in depth. And he set a deadline to submit joint proposal with the municipal authorities for the development of the garrisons and base compounds by 1 February. Considering all the wishes, the “road map” will have been put together in full by mid-March.*