



Thinning the Ranks

OE Watch Commentary: A modern and combat-ready military remains a key priority for the current Kremlin leadership. Trillions of rubles have been spent over the past several years to improve the overall image and fighting capabilities of Russia's armed forces. However, as the brief excerpt from the pro-business daily *Kommersant* claims, this combat ready, martial demeanor is not reflected in all those who wear the Russian military uniform- especially among senior officers. According to the passage, "Russia's Defense Ministry has decided to discharge obese servicemen" in an effort to improve the military's image, and perhaps, trim down the upper-level ranks.

The article points out that "commanders will be instructed to draw up a list of subordinates with stage III and IV obesity, after which a medical commission will rule on their fitness for military duties." The article explains the "four stages of obesity: Stage I is when excess body mass exceeds the 'ideal' by 10-29 percent, stage II by 30-49 percent, stage III by 50-99 percent, and stage IV is more than twice the 'ideal' body mass." This excerpt explains that "the Defense Ministry would not reveal how many servicemen are expected to fall into a category liable for medical discharge, citing data protection," but that this "move will make it possible to sharpen up the ranks."

Covering the same story, the second excerpt is from a Siberian news source (*URA News*), which includes quotes from two popular military journalists (Viktor Baranets and Dmitry Litovkin). Baranets points out that these high levels of obesity are rare in the military and that these "measures will affect less than one percent." He goes on to posit that there is now "a struggle for the image of the army – fat slob are not liked anywhere: neither in the troops, nor among the staff." Litovkin echoes these sentiments, stating that "it is unseemly when heavy, obese generals stand in the ranks," and that their poor physique "is not an example for young officers." Litovkin ends the article on an optimistic note, claiming that the "leaders of the Syrian operation" are a good example of today's more professional-looking Russian officers, as they were all "smart, physically strong people, without flabby stomachs." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"The army is supposed to keep itself in shape."

Source: Ivan Safronov, "Минобороны объявило войну лишнему весу (Defense Ministry Declares War on Surplus Weight)," *Kommersant Online*, 8 November 2017. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3472466>

Russia's Defense Ministry has decided to discharge obese servicemen: A directive to this effect has already been circulated to the personnel officers of all units. Commanders will be instructed to draw up a list of subordinates with stage III and IV obesity, after which a medical commission will rule on their fitness for military duties....

... According to the book Obesity, published in 1964 and written by Professor Mikhail Yegorov and Doctor Leonid Levitskiy, medics identify four stages of obesity: Stage I is when excess body mass exceeds the "ideal" by 10-29 percent, stage II by 30-49 percent, stage III by 50-99 percent, and stage IV is more than twice the "ideal" body mass. Kommersant's sources at the Defense Ministry would not reveal how many servicemen are expected to fall into a category liable for medical discharge, citing data protection. But they did say that the move will make it possible to "sharpen up the ranks:" "The army is supposed to keep itself in shape."

Source: Sergey Makeev, Leo Istomin, "Некоторые военные срочно ставили себе клизму, чтобы похудеть (Some military urgently gave themselves an enema in order to lose weight)," *URA News*, 18 November 2017. <https://ura.news/news/1052313004>

The Russian Armed Forces will get rid of military personnel with excess weight. This decision was taken by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu following the results of the medical examination of servicemen in 2017. Until December 15, service personnel with third and fourth degrees of obesity will be offered to resign or transfer to other posts.

The presence of such an order was confirmed to the correspondent of URA.RU by the military observer of Komsomolskaya Pravda, the retired colonel and former head of the press service of the Defense Ministry Viktor Baranets. "There is indeed such an order of the Ministry of Defense, which says it will fire military personnel who fall under the third and fourth degrees of obesity. But we are not talking about mass layoffs - the measures will affect less than one percent," the source said....

...According to the expert, the new order of the Ministry of Defense will become a signal for those who do not care about their physical form and the image of the Russian military in general: "There is a struggle for the image of the army – fat slob are not liked anywhere: neither in the troops, nor among the staffs..." Baranets noted that there will not be hasty decisions on dismissals - all those who do not meet the parameters will get a chance to improve their physical form, and the final decisions will be taken by the chief medical department and the main personnel department of the Ministry of Defense.

More details about the causes and consequences of the "cleansing" of the military ranks "URA.RU" was told by retired colonel, military expert, TASS military observer Viktor Litovkin. "The army is an organism young, so the personnel hunger does not threaten it. Nevertheless, some colonels and generals should carefully consider this order and take up their own figure. Because it is unseemly, when heavy, obese generals stand in the ranks. This is not an example for young officers. This order will force some officers to do more physical training, and take better care of their health," said Litovkin....

...According to Litovkin, the leaders of the Syrian operation are a good example for overweight officers: "they are smart, physically strong people, without flabby stomachs..."