



## Mandatory Patriotic Training?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Kremlin leadership continues to place considerable emphasis upon strengthening the country's military awareness and sense of patriotism, particularly among Russia's younger generation. One of the more recent vehicles for youth patriotic instruction is the Young Army movement, created by Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu in mid-2016 (see: "Young Army for all Schools," *OE Watch*, December 2018). The movement, which began as a voluntary, scouting-type organization for children (8-18 years old), now appears to be transforming into something more mandatory. As the accompanying excerpt from the pro-business daily *Kommersant* points out, participation in the movement may soon be required of children of both active duty military officers and employees in Russia's military-industrial complex.

The article begins by quoting a proposal which was sent to the leadership of the military industry complex (MIC) with the goal of "developing the Young Army movement" within their enterprises. The article does not describe what type of training would be involved for the children associated with the MIC. The excerpt also refers to an earlier article which describes a "letter of the acting deputy commander of the Eastern Military District with a request to take into Young Army movement 100% of the children of officers aged between 8 and 18 years old."

The latest directive to enlist children into the movement may be prompted by a desire to please higher headquarters. The excerpt includes a quote from a *Kommersant* source who claims that Defense Minister Shoygu "pays great attention" to the development of this movement and that for company directors by "supporting this initiative means supporting him personally." The article goes on to point out that according to the plans of the Ministry of Defense, "by 2020 there should be about a million people" enrolled in the Young Army movement. There are currently some 350,000 Russian youth enrolled.

According to its original mandate, one of the objectives of the Young Army movement is to instill a greater sense of healthy patriotism among Russia's younger generation. The article quotes a representative of the "Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committees of Russia," who questions how such a directive to enlist the children of MIC employees will be implemented, suggesting that "the intervention of the military in children's structures causes concern." If this is any indication, the requirement that children of military officers and employees of Russia's MIC join the movement does not necessarily guarantee that this goal will be met. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*"According to a Kommersant source, 'Sergey Shoygu pays great attention to the development of the movement, supporting this initiative means supporting him personally.'"*



Young Army cadets in Severomorsk.

Source: [http://eng.mil.ru/images/upload/2015/2016-08-03\\_yunarmy\\_severomorsk-900\\_22.jpg](http://eng.mil.ru/images/upload/2015/2016-08-03_yunarmy_severomorsk-900_22.jpg), CC 4.0.

**Source:** Ksenia Mironova and Ivan Sinergiey, "Военным заводам заказали Юнарию: Минобороны просит создать отделения движения на всех предприятиях ОПК (Military Plants ordered Young Army: The Ministry of Defense asks all defense enterprises to create a branch of the movement)," *Kommersant*, 12 March 2019. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3908185>

*As it became known to Kommersant, detachments of the military-patriotic movement Young Army may appear at the enterprises of the Russian military-industrial complex. The corresponding proposal was sent to the leadership of the defense industry complex with the goal of "developing the Young Army movement", the number of which, according to the plans of the military, by 2020 there should be about a million people. Earlier, Kommersant reported about the letter of the acting deputy commander of the Eastern Military District with a request to take into Young Army movement 100% of the children of officers aged between 8 and 18 years old....*

*...On the plans to expand the activities of the military patriotic Young Army movement at the enterprises of the military-industrial complex, several sources involved in the implementation of the state defense order told Kommersant.... According to a Kommersant source, "Sergey Shoygu pays great attention to the development of the movement, supporting this initiative means supporting him personally."*

*Valentina Grebenik, executive secretary of the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committees of Russia, believes that in this way the military is trying to substantiate the activities of the main military and political directorate... "I do not understand how this should be implemented.... And in general, the intervention of the military in children's structures causes concern," notes Mrs Grebenik.*

*In the future, the number should increase significantly: for example, on February 26, the first deputy chief of the main military-political directorate, General Alexei Tsygankov, said that by 9 May, the ministry predicts an increase in the number Young Army members to reach 500,000. To this end, the Ministry of Defense proposes to create an Young Army squad in each school, open the houses of Young Army in each region and launch a year-round network of Young Army camps based on the branches of Patriot Park. By the 75th anniversary of the Victory in 2020, it is planned to increase the number of Young Army to 1 million members...*