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Army to Stop Using Footwraps

By The Moscow Times

January 14, 2013



Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Monday that he supports the scrapping of the footwraps worn by Russian soldiers instead of socks.

The footwraps, or portyaniki, require special lessons to be able to wind correctly around your feet and avoid debilitating sores. They were first worn by soldiers in the Tsarist army during the 19th century.

Shoigu, who was appointed Defense Minister in November, told a military conference that by the end of the year the army "should have forgotten" the word portyaniki, RIA-Novosti reported.

Footwraps, large pieces of rectangular cloth, do not require daily washing, unlike socks.

Other officials were quick to express their support for Shoigu's initiative.

"Footwraps are a remnant of the past," said Igor Barinov, a member of the Duma's Defense

Committee. "Now there are modern technologies and materials so that soldiers' feet do not need to get chafed when wearing shoes."

But the announcement by Shoigu is not the first time a defense minister has expressed an intention to get rid of the footwraps. They were scheduled to be discarded as a part of uniform reforms advocated by his predecessor, Anatoly Serdyukov.

Russia, which has about 1 million people serving in the armed forces, is one of the few countries in the world to still use footwraps. Most other large armies switched to socks in the mid-20th century.

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