

New Defense Minister Under Fire for Proposing Ukraine Victory Parade in Sevastopol

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Ukrainian Colonel-General Valery Heletey (L) shakes hands with President Petro Poroshenko in the Ukrainian parliament in Kiev.

Ukraine's newly appointed defense minister's vow to hold a Ukrainian victory parade in Sevastopol has sparked an avalanche of criticism in the predominantly pro-separatist coastal city — with accusations the minister is "delusional" and one volunteer proposing they hold a "gay parade" in high heels and G-strings instead.

Valeriy Heletey's pledge to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and wrestle back Crimea from Russia, which annexed the Black Sea peninsula in March after a contentious referendum, was received with applause in the Kiev-based parliament on Thursday.

But Sevastopol did not take kindly to his words.

"The intentions of the Ukrainian defense minister do not coincide with the plans of the

federal city of the Russian Federation for the next one thousand years. We are not planning to hold Ukrainian parades here, only parades of Russian ships and military units and free Russian citizens of Sevastopol" Yevgeny Dubovnik, the city's deputy governor, was quoted as saying Thursday, NTV reported, citing ITAR-Tass,

Vasily Parkhmenko, a deputy of the Sevastopol Legislative Assembly, said Heletey was "out of touch with the real political situation in the countries bordering Ukraine," referring to Sevastopol as a separate political entity.

Other residents were more brazen in their comments, with Konstantin Zarudnev, head of a local voluntary group, saying cynically in comments carried by Itar-Tass: "The only parade they can hold here is a gay parade. Let them wear fur jackets, G-strings and high-heeled shoes. Just not in the city center, but there where we tell them to," he said.

Sevastopol authorities earlier banned a Gay Pride march planned for April, causing widespread concern conditions for the LGBT community would take a hit as a result of the peninsula's adoption of the Russian gay propaganda law.

Heletey, 46, was appointed defense minister on Thursday as Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko looks to bring a swift end to the violence in the country's east, where government forces are continuing an offensive against pro-Russian separatists.

See also:

[Ukraine's President Poroshenko Appoints New Defense Minister](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/04/new-defense-minister-under-fire-for-proposing-ukraine-victory-parade-in-sevastopol-a37034)

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