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Siberian Convicts Make Life-Size Tank, Missile Launcher Out of Snow

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A model of a Topol M ballistic missile launcher.

Prisoners in Siberia have been given a novel alternative to breaking rocks: They are whiling away their time in jail by creating life-size replicas of tanks and other Russian military equipment out of snow and ice.

A correctional institute in the Omsk region decided to hold a military-themed snow sculpture contest for the prisoners in honor of the Defenders of the Fatherland public holiday celebrated on Feb. 23, the regional branch of the Federal Penitentiary Service said on its website.

The winner of the competition was a model of a Topol M ballistic missile launcher that impressed the jury with its attention to detail, the statement said.

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Second prize went to a full-size replica of the iconic Soviet T-34 tank, complete with a cannon and dyed green for authenticity. Third place was won by a snowy version of a war monument to Red Army soldiers.

"The main aim of the event is to occupy prisoners in a useful way after working hours, and to identify and develop their creative abilities," Yevgeny Vagin, head of the department of educational services at the correctional facility, was cited in the statement as saying.

Defenders of the Fatherland Day is not the first occasion prisoners have celebrated by turning their hand to snow sculpting: They earlier held a Christmas and New Year-themed competition, the statement said.

A similar competition was also held by the Western Military District, in which both contract servicemen and conscripts took part, the Defense Ministry said in an online statement last month.

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