The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Pro-Putin Bikers Get 99.9% Rent Discount for 'Patriotic' Sports Zone

By Jennifer Monaghan

May 14, 2015



Leader of the motorcycling club Night Wolves Alexander Zaldostanov (C), nicknamed "Khirurg" (Surgeon), performs during a festive concert marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War Two in Europe, at Red Square in Moscow.

Motorcycle club Night Wolves has been allotted more than 250 hectares of land in Crimea for the purposes of developing a "patriotic" sports and healthy living center.

The local government in Sevastopol, the biggest city on the peninsula, has offered the Night Wolves bikers 267 hectares of land at a favorable rate of 0.1 percent of its actual price, according to a decree published Tuesday on the administration's website. The low rent takes into account the "not-for-profit" and "socially orientated" nature of the group, the decree read.

In return, the Night Wolves will use the space "to promote the popularization of healthy

lifestyles, improve the moral and psychological state of the people, develop physical culture and sports, [and provide] a patriotic education for citizens of the Russian Federation."

The group will be allowed to develop hotels, retail and food outlets on up to 1 percent of the land, according to the decree. "A profitable sort of patriotism," anti-corruption campaigner Alexei Navalny wrote Wednesday on Twitter.

Georgi Alburov from Navalny's Anti-Corruption Fund said the rent worked out at the equivalent of about 50 kopeks (1 U.S. cent) a square meter, the BBC's Russian Service reported. The rent of the plot will therefore cost the Night Wolves about 14 million rubles ($280,000) — 99.9 percent less than its original value.

The lease will last for 10 years and the bikers have one month from the issuance of the decree on Tuesday to sign the contract, the report said.

The Night Wolves motorcycle club shot to international fame earlier this month when they embarked on a trip from Moscow to Berlin in honor of the 70th anniversary of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, which Russia celebrated on May 9.

Some members were stopped by Polish and Lithuanian border guards who cited a lack of correct documents for entry, though about 10 bikers made it all the way through to Berlin, Britain's The Guardian newspaper reported.

Contact the author at j.monaghan@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/14/pro-putin-bikers-get-999-rent-discount-for-patriotic-sports-zone-a46553