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New Commander Appointed Amid Russia's Baltic Fleet Shake-Up

By The Moscow Times

July 01, 2016



Alexander Nosatov

In the wake of an unprecedented purge of dozens of senior officers from Russia's Baltic Sea Fleet, the Defense Ministry on July 1 appointed two seasoned admirals from the larger Black Sea and Pacific groupings to take the helm and stabilize the ailing fleet, the Kommersant daily newspaper reported, citing Defense Ministry sources.

The new commander of the fleet will be Vice-Admiral Alexander Nosatov, who served as the head of the Baltic Fleet's main naval base in Kaliningrad from 2009-2012. For the past four years, he served as deputy commander of the Black Sea Fleet. He also served as the head of the naval academy. Nosatov's chief of staff will be Vice Admiral Igor Mukhametshin, who served as the head of strategic submarine forces in the Pacific fleet.

The search for senior staff to command the fleet began immediately after the announcement on June 29 that Vice-Admiral Viktor Kravchuk and his Chief of Staff, Sergei Popov, would be

dismissed from military service. Under their charge, the Defense Ministry found “serious shortcomings” in the fleet's combat training, discipline, and “distorted reports on the real state of affairs” in the fleet.

The purge reportedly continued through Friday, with some 50 senior officers dismissed from service as part of the Defense Ministry's crackdown on the Baltic Fleet — the smallest and most overlooked of Russia's four major naval groupings. The new officers have been given a deadline of the end of this year to turn the state of affairs in the Baltic Fleet around.

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