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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Celebrates Defender of the Fatherland Day

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Russians around the country celebrate the Defender of the Fatherland Day national holiday Feb. 23.

The holiday, which is accompanied by a day off from work for most Russians, celebrates servicemen or servicewomen who used to or currently serve in the Russian Armed Forces.

Founded in 1919 to mark the establishment of the Soviet Red Army, the name was changed to Red Army Day in 1923. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the official holiday was renamed the Defender of the Fatherland Day.

Informally, the holiday is now known as Men's Day, and women give small gifts to their male friends, colleagues and relatives on this day.

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