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Russian Military Plans To Train Orthodox Priests To Operate Combat Vehicles

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Vladimir Smirnov / TASS

The Russian military plans to train Orthodox Church priests to drive combat vehicles and operate military communications equipment to prepare them for emergency situations in battle.

Around 30 chaplains embedded with the Airborne Troops will board Russia's BMD-4M infantry fighting vehicles next week, the state-run TASS news agency cited an Omsk church official as saying Thursday.

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"Clergy on tour with the Airborne Troops in 'hotspots' are often forced to evacuate wounded soldiers from the battlefield in armoured personnel carriers," a spokesperson for the Omsk diocese told TASS, explaining the reasoning behind the military workshop.

“It’s good if the priest was a military man and knows what to do from his own experience. But what if he doesn’t?” the official was cited as saying.

According to the official, the priests will be prohibited from training with weapons and will only learn how to operate combat vehicles and communications equipment. The workshop will be held at a military training center outside the Siberian city of Omsk next week, TASS reported.

“What if the only hope for saving the wounded lies with the unarmed regimental priest, who doesn’t know how to operate a combat vehicle or initiate communications?” the official asked.

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