

Russian Priests Should Stop Blessing Nukes, Church Proposal Says

By [Tom Balmforth for Reuters](#)

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Russian priests have long appeared in images sprinkling holy water on submarines, ballistic missiles, Soyuz space rockets and other pieces of hardware as part of rituals to bless them. **Alexei Pavlishak / TASS**

Russian priests should refrain from the practice of blessing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that can inflict indiscriminate loss of life, according to new guidelines being discussed by the Russian Orthodox Church.

During two decades in power, President Vladimir Putin has aligned himself with the Orthodox Church, which has also developed closer ties with the Defense Ministry.

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But some of that is set to stop if the church approves a document drawn up by an Orthodox Church commission.

"The blessing of military weapons is not reflected in the tradition of the Orthodox Church and does not correspond to the content of the Rite," the document, on the Moscow patriarchate's website, says.

Blessing or sanctifying weapons that can kill an "indefinite number of people" must be excluded from pastoral practice, it says.

The proposals will be discussed until June 1 and the public should also take part in the debate, the church's Moscow branch said.

In a striking symbol of close defense-church ties in Russia, the armed forces are building their own sprawling cathedral at a military themed park outside Moscow. It is set to be one of the tallest Orthodox churches in the world.

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