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Honor Guard 'Punished' for Servicing Russia's First in a Century Royal Wedding – Reports

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The wedding in St Isaac's Cathedral. **Alexander Demianchuk / TASS**

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has taken disciplinary action against his subordinates in St. Petersburg for sending honor guards to the country's first royal wedding in over a century, news agencies reported Wednesday.

The Russian military's honor guard was filmed last Friday forming a saber arch during Grand Duke George Mikhailovich Romanov and his Italian fiancée Rebecca Virginia Bettarini's wedding. The lavish ceremony marked Russia's first royal nuptials since Romanov's relative Nicholas II was executed with his family by the Bolsheviks in 1918, ending the imperial monarchy and bringing about 70 years of Soviet rule.

Citing unnamed Defense Ministry sources, the state-run TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies reported that the ministry's Western Military District had violated regulations by sending honor guard personnel to Romanov's wedding.

“An official investigation established violations of governing documents by individual officials,” one of the sources was quoted as saying.

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The reports did not indicate what type of disciplinary action was brought against the Western Military District or who exactly was targeted. The district itself did not comment on the reported reprimand.

The Russian Imperial House stressed that the honor guard’s participation was legally sanctioned.

“The wedding organizers agreed with every authority — state, church, military — in accordance with the procedure established by law,” Alexander Zakatov, the Imperial House head’s director of the chancellery, told the Podyom news website.

The Kremlin played down the significance of the royal wedding last week, saying “many weddings take place every day in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities.”

“We always wish happiness to the newlyweds,” President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

No Russian government officials were reported among the 1,500 guests at the St. Isaac’s Cathedral ceremony, with the exception of Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova and senator Lyudmila Narusova, the widow of St. Petersburg’s ex-Mayor Anatoly Sobchak.

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