

Russian Orthodox Church Establishes 'Head Military Priest' Post

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Archpriest Dmitry Vasilenkov. **Priest Evgeny Kostylev / YouTube**

Russian Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill on Thursday established a new senior ecclesiastical position to oversee the Church's activities in Ukrainian territories where Russia is waging war on Kyiv.

Archpriest Dimitry Vasilenkov, who is a clergy member of the St. Petersburg diocese, has been named head military priest, the Church's press service [said](#) in a statement, citing Patriarch Kirill's decree.

In his new role, Vasilenkov will be responsible for the spiritual mentoring of soldiers and members of Russian security services who are fighting in what Moscow calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Related article: [Patriarch Kirill 'Understands' Ukraine Church Schism](#)

Under the leadership of Patriarch Kirill, the Russian Orthodox Church has strongly backed the military campaign in Ukraine, [calling](#) on supporters to rally to fight Moscow's "external and internal enemies."

In June the United Kingdom [sanctioned](#) the Church head for his support of the invasion, describing him as an "enabler and perpetrator of Putin's war."

The Russian Orthodox Church dismissed the sanctions, saying: "Attempts to intimidate the primate of the Russian Church with something or to force him to renounce his views are senseless, absurd and unpromising."

In 2020, Russia [opened](#) a massive Orthodox cathedral dedicated to the country's Armed Forces, a monument reflecting years of deepening relations between the military and the church.

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