

Russian Defense Ministry Publishes Rare Footage of Tatarstan Drone Factory Employing Teens

July 21, 2025



Video grab

A Russian factory producing attack drones for strikes on Ukraine relies heavily on teenage students and young trainees to staff its assembly lines, a recent broadcast by the Defense Ministry-run Zvezda TV channel has [shown](#).

The Alabuga facility in the republic of Tatarstan manufactures modified Iranian-designed Shahed-136 drones, known in Russia as Geran.

In the Zvezda report, thousands of drones were shown rolling off production lines staffed largely by ninth-grade students and college trainees from a local polytechnic school.

“Hundreds of machines and thousands of workers keep the factory running. Young boys and girls work here while simultaneously attending the affiliated college, which is run by the same people who manage the factory,” the Zvezda presenter said.

Recruitment begins immediately after ninth grade, with factory employment guaranteed once they graduate from the Alabuga Polytechnic College.

A banner inside the factory reads: “Kurchatov, Korolyov and Stalin live in your DNA,” referring to Soviet scientists and the Soviet dictator.

Embed:

Телеканал «Звезда» показал студентов колледжа, собирающих БПЛА «Герань» (российское название иранского дрона Shahed-136) в Татарстане

В репортаже утверждается, что беспилотники производят «тысячами», в том числе — при помощи студентов местного колледжа «Алабуга Политех»:

«Сотни... pic.twitter.com/pGGIixNGti

— Дождь (@tvrain) [July 21, 2025](#)

According to EuroNews, the Tatarstan plant now [produces](#) over half of Russia’s attack drones, manufacturing 18,000 units in the first half of 2025 alone.

Military analyst Konrad Muzyka noted that the drones have undergone six different modifications, making them increasingly difficult for Ukrainian air defense systems to intercept.

Russia has [intensified](#) drone strikes on Ukraine this summer, launching a record 728 drones in a single night earlier this month.

Independent investigations by Russian outlets Protokol and RZVRT have [exposed](#) harsh working conditions at the factory.

Student workers reportedly endure round-the-clock shifts with little time for rest or meals. Refusing to work can result in expulsion from the college and financial penalties for families.

Journalists also uncovered the recruitment of underage female students from African countries for janitorial and menial tasks inside the facility.

Tatarstan officials have attempted to formalize teenage labor in defense production.

Proposals included employing students as young as 14 and amending Russia’s Labor Code to allow 16-year-olds to work in hazardous environments, but both measures have stalled amid criticism from activists and lawmakers.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/07/21/russian-defense-ministry-publishes-rare-footage-of-tat-arstan-drone-factory-employing-teens-a89902>