

Defense Ministry Gets New Oversight Chief

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August 09, 2010

The  **Moscow Times**

Tatyana Shevtsova, a former deputy head of the Federal Tax Service, has become the ninth deputy minister in the Defense Ministry, where she will coordinate all of its oversight activities and services.

President Dmitry Medvedev signed an order on Friday naming Shevtsova to the post, filling the last vacant deputy minister's position, as required under a June presidential order. That makes her the second female deputy minister in the current Defense Ministry, after Vera Chistova, a former Finance Ministry official who has overseen the ministry's finances since 2008.

In early July, the Defense Ministry's chief of staff and Shevtsova's former boss at the tax service, Mikhail Mokretsov, was also made a deputy minister. Of the ministry's nine deputy heads, just two of them are generals: General Staff chief Nikolai Makarov and Dmitry Bulgakov, deputy minister for administrative issues.

Defense Ministry spokesman Alexei Kuznetsov said the new deputy minister would coordinate all of the body's oversight services and activities. A former Defense Ministry official said Shevtsova was a talented economist as well as an exacting official, whose subordinates at the Federal Tax Service were very afraid of her.

From the start of the year, Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov has been drawing in former subordinates, including Mokretsov, and it became clear that the departing tax chief's close associates would also follow him to the ministry.

The Defense Ministry has at least 10 different oversight bodies, and Shevtsova will have to create a smoothly functioning system from them, said the former ministry official.

The ministry is divided into civil and military branches, and the main task of the civil branch — and the primary reason it is packed with former tax officials — is to oversee the generals' spending and bookkeeping, especially relating to state defense orders, said Igor Korotchenko, a member of the Defense Ministry's public committee.

The "invasion" of civilian officials from the tax service is entirely justified, said Ruslan Pukhov, head of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, a think tank. The defense ministries of all Western countries are filled with civilian auditors, whose responsibilities are to oversee their militaries' massive budgets, he said.

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