

Navy to Get British Furniture

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The  **Moscow Times**

Russian naval ships will soon be outfitted with British-made furniture, a decision raising some eyebrows, but well in keeping with recent moves made by Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov — a former furniture salesman.

The ships will get their own supply of furniture from British manufacturer Strongbox Marine Furniture, which outfits the British Royal Navy and has a dealership in St. Petersburg, reported the Central Naval Portal web site.

Each ship will receive a customized interior, with even those of the same model having different designs, a spokesman for the furniture company told Izvestia.

Furniture has become a major focus for the Defense Ministry since Serdyukov took charge. Last year, the military spent 18.3 million rubles (\$590,000) on office furniture, the newspaper reported.

Serdyukov started as the supervisor of a small furniture shop, rising to the position of general director of a major furniture company 15 years later. He later headed the Tax Ministry before being appointed Defense Minister in 2007.

But his background in furniture has stuck with him, and sometimes has made him the butt of jokes.

At least one retired naval commander told Izvestia that it was disappointing that the Russian fleet would not have Russian-made furniture. Another officer, however, told the paper that British furniture is considered the best in the world and mariners are excited about living in high-quality conditions.

The retrofit is expected to be completed by 2014, the Naval Portal reported.

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