

# Military Churches Ready to Drop From the Sky

March 28, 2012

**The**  **Moscow Times**

Russian paratroopers might soon become the most spiritually well-armed part of the Russian military with the rollout of "inflatable church-tents" that can be deposited in a drop zone — but only if the Russian Orthodox Church backs the idea.

"If the churches are officially introduced, they might be put on the ground from aircraft" along with other paratroopers' equipment, including self-propelled guns, the Defense Ministry's Air Force spokesman, Colonel Alexander Kucherenko, said Wednesday, according to Interfax.

But Dmitry Smirnov, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department in charge of cooperation with the armed forces, told *Russkaya Sluzhba Novostei* radio that "the inflatable churches" are a private effort by one priest in the Air Force and that they haven't yet been sanctioned by the church.

Earlier this month, paratroopers and priests tested the world's first paradrop church in the Ryazan region southeast of Moscow, RIA-Novosti reported.

The church construction was funded by the church to "satisfy the religious needs of the military," the Defense Ministry said in an earlier statement.

According to Kucherenko, a great number of people serving with the Air Force are Orthodox believers. He said that currently dozens of military priests serve with the Air Force, with most as contract servicemen.

"Some priests have already fulfilled their service with the Air Force, which helps them encourage young people" parachuting for the first time, Kucherenko said, Interfax reported.

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