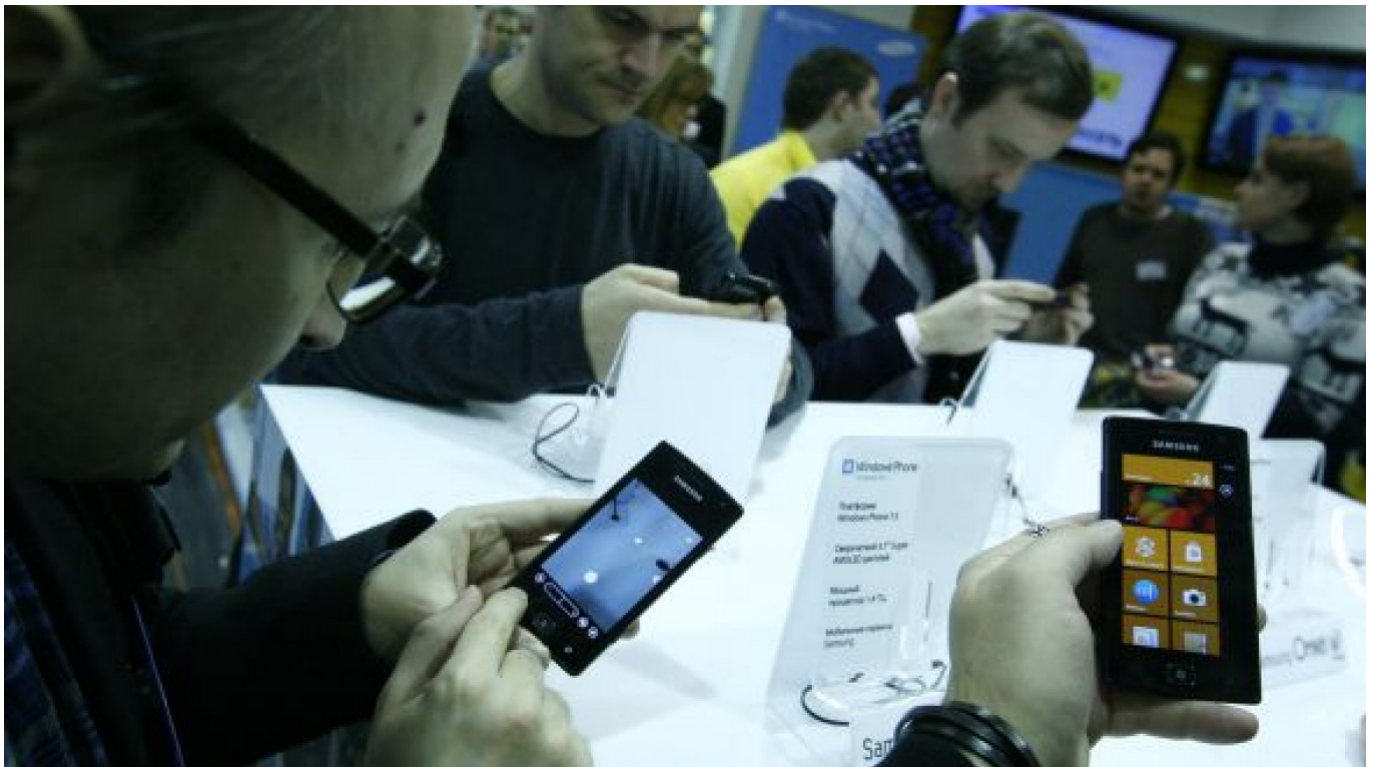


Minister Sees Faster, Costlier Frequency Conversion

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mobile users will only be seeing faster connections after frequencies now used by the military are freed up. **Denis Abramov**

The Communications and Press Ministry might speed up the conversion of military frequencies for commercial 4G mobile services, but the process could become more expensive.

At a government meeting last week, Communications and Press Minister Nikolai Nikiforov proposed converting one necessary spectrum by 2014 and another by 2015. Otherwise, networks won't be able to handle LTE traffic, he said. Under the previous plan, the conversion of a 260-megahertz spectrum would take 10 years, Nikiforov added.

Spending on the conversion is projected at 100 billion rubles (\$3 billion), he said. A source with a mobile operator estimated the expected amount of investment at 120 billion to 125 billion rubles.

Nikiforov said the conversion program faced two obstacles.

First, there is no link between the frequency conversion program, which has been adopted by the State Radio Frequencies Commission, and the Defense Ministry's arms purchasing program, he said. That is why the Communications and Press Ministry has no say on which military facilities will participate in the conversion, Nikiforov added.

Second, currently only the government is able to finance the conversion, while telecommunications companies have no tools for funding it, he said.

Naum Marder, an outgoing deputy of Nikiforov, is skeptical about the ministry's plans. He said it would be impossible to convert the frequencies in two years. The conversion will be carried out using domestic equipment but the production of such equipment cannot be increased sufficiently in two years regardless of how much is invested, he said. Marder added that he believed the announcement that the conversion would be faster was a PR stunt.

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