

25-Meter Statue of Orthodox Saint to Protect Moscow

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Approved by the Moscow city legislature last week, the state-funded monument will cost 150 million rubles (\$2.5 million).

Moscow will erect a 25-meter statue of Vladimir the Great, the ruler of Kievan Rus who converted his nation to Christianity, as Russia and Ukraine vie to claim the Orthodox saint on the 1000th anniversary of his death.

Standing on Vorobyovy Gory overlooking Moscow city center, the giant figure of Vladimir could be unveiled on National Unity Day, a Russian national holiday on Nov. 4, the city's Moskva news agency reported, citing a city official. Approved by the Moscow city legislature last week, the state-funded monument will cost 150 million rubles (\$2.5 million).

The decision comes as Moscow swells with patriotism amid a standoff with the West over Ukraine, where Russia has backed separatists fighting in the country's east.

"Saint Vladimir is a great defender of our country and our capital. ... The monument will not be seen as a representation of a specific historical figure but as a sort of spiritual talisman," Yevgeny Gerasimov, head of the culture and mass media committee in the Moscow city legislature, was quoted by Moskva as saying.

The statue, which will be the height of an eight-story building, will depict Vladimir with a sword strapped to his thigh and holding a cross above his head.

Born around 960 AD, Vladimir was a prince of Kievan Rus, a forerunner to the modern Russian state with its capital in Kiev. In 988, Vladimir ditched the paganism of his ancestors and converted his realm to Orthodox Christianity. He was baptized in Crimea, the region annexed from Ukraine by Russia last year.

With relations between Ukraine and Russia at rock bottom, both nations are trying to claim Vladimir as their own. Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko last week signed an order for the commemoration of the 1000-year anniversary of Vladimir's burial this year. The document calls Vladimir a creator of "the European state of Rus-Ukraine in the middle ages," and says the marking of the prince's death aims to "preserve and confirm the traditions of Ukrainian statehood," according to a translation on Russian news website newsru.com.

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