

Female Naval Cadets Say Russia Not Ready for Women in Combat Roles

By [Reuters](#)

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Alexei Pavlishak / TASS

Alina Politika is one of 42 female cadets attending the naval academy in Russia's Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad, but she knows she is unlikely to ever step onto the captain's bridge of a battleship.

Politka's diploma and military rank after graduation won't differ from those of male cadets, but the Russian navy does not accept women as commanding officers — a situation she sees no need to change for now.

"In the future we can achieve this," Politika said. "If we compare to foreign states, there are women serving on ships and we know there are female captains in command [in other countries]."

Politika said she was satisfied with her future role on shore — the only option women have in

today's Russian navy. It was a view echoed by other female cadets at the academy.

Kaliningrad is home to Russia's Baltic fleet and is surrounded by Poland and Lithuania, both members of NATO, whose relations with Russia have been strained by the Ukraine crisis and other issues.

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In the course of their studies Politika and other future female officers endure all the aspects of cadet life, including training in martial arts and diving practice as well as simulation of the captain's bridge operation.

Russia's N. G. Kuznetsov Naval Academy opened its doors to women in 2008. Competition among young Russian women to join the naval cadets has steadily grown ever since, despite having to accept limits on foreign travel and no mobile phones on campus.

Politika named discipline, responsibility and attention to detail as among the qualities making female cadets equal to men.

"Our experience shows that women are not worse than men, sometimes they are even better," she said.

Politika and other female cadets would face legal obstacles if they sought equal opportunities with men.

A Russian government decree signed by President Vladimir Putin in 2000 lists 456 jobs in 38 industries which women are barred from doing because they would entail 'heavy work and work in harmful working conditions'.

The role of captain is not on the list but seaman is – and serving a seaman's apprenticeship is standard practice for male cadets and a necessary step to take on a command role.

Politika said she had no problems with that: "I think so far in our country it is not needed."

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