



Military priests from Kola Peninsula are decorated for service on occupied land

Description

Denichenko was given the medal 'for faith and service to the motherland' in a recent ceremony in the Cathedral for the Russian Armed Forces in Moscow.

The priest from the north Russian border town was awarded the medal along with a big number of clergymen that have been on occupied Ukrainian land as part of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Oleg Denichenko gets medal for 'faith and service to the motherland' following his service on occupied land. Photo: Severomorsk Diocese on VK

The award ceremony took place during the recent Conference for Military Priesthood, reportedly the first event of the kind in Russia since 1917. On site in the giant military-coloured cathedral was Minister of Defence Andrei Belousov and the patriarch himself, Kirill.

Medals for the priests that have served on occupied territory. Photo: patriarchia.ru

On a photo [shared](#) by the church, Denichenko stands proudly with the medal on his chest next to Lieutenant General Viktor Goremykin, the military man responsible for church relations, and Metropolitan Kirill, head of the Church Military Department.

Oleg Denichenko normally serves in the Holy Troitsky church in Zapolyarny, the small town located only few kilometres from the border to Norway and Finland.

Oleg Denichenko is priest for the congregation in the border town of Zapolyarny. Photo: Severomorsk Diocese

The church belongs to the diocese of Severomorsk, the headquarter city of Russia's Northern Fleet, and Denichenko on daily basis closely cooperates with the Armed Forces. The priest regularly travels to the nearby military base in Pechenga to serve in the local chapel and follow up soldiers in the 200th Motorised Rifle Brigade.

Denichenko is not the only clergyman from the Murmansk region that has been sent to serve on occupied territory. Another at least six priests have for periods been near the frontline.

All of them normally serve in regional navy towns.

Among them is Leonid Suloyev, the militaristic priest that works in Oleniya Bay, the naval base that houses Russia's notorious the Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research (GUGI).

Leonid Suloyev in Kirkenes, Norway, in 2016. Photo: VK page of Suloyev

Over the past couple of years, Suloyev has been closely engaged in the construction of a new church building in Oleniya Bay.

The priest previously served in Russian special forces. He is a passionate motorcycle rider and a member of the Night Wolf biker group. He has been on a number of bike tours with the Night Wolves, including to Norway. Judging from his [VK social media page](#), he was in the Nordic country twice in 2016-2017. In October 2016, he is seen on a photo in front of the war memorial in the border town of Kirkenes.

Among the other priests that have been in occupied parts of Ukraine is Sergei Sherfetdinov, head of the diocese missionary department and priest in Vidyaevo and Ura-Guba.

Leonid Suloyev together with leader of the Night Wolves Aleksandr Zaldastanov. Photo: Suloyev on VK

Aleksandr Zaitsev serves in Zaozersk and is head of the diocese department of religious education. Artur Zaiko serves in Gadzhievo.

Also father Sergei Cherichenko has been several times in Ukraine. He normally heads the congregation in Sputnik. He is passionate about martial arts and heads the diocese Department of Sports. As reported by the Barents Observer, he might have been in Ukraine not only with a cross, [but also with weapons in his hands](#).

Archpriest Sergei Cherichenko (left) on occupied land. Photo: Telegram channel Dobrovoltsy Severa

Over the past two years, several hundred Russian Orthodox priests have been on occupied territory for

serve Russian warriors. [More than 30 of them are reported to have been killed](#). According to Patriarch Kirill, up to 25 priests are at any given time working in the war zone. They serve in periods for 2-4 weeks at the time, he [said](#) in late 2022 in a meeting with military clergymen that had returned from duty.

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