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Fall 1997 Russian Military Draft

CALL Publication #98-22

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"I (name) solemnly swear my loyalty to the fatherland, the Russian Federation. I swear to scrupulously follow the Constitution of the Russian Federation, strictly carry out the demands of military regulations, the orders of my commanders and superiors. I vow to worthily fulfill my military duty, courageously defend the freedom, independence and constitutional order of Russia, its people and the Fatherland.

The oath of the Russian draftee¹

I tried to quote some figures: number of suicides, number of killed. In fact, there are no exact figures--and this is the most frightening fact. The boys conscripted into the Army are not needed. Nobody counts them: either dead or alive.

Press Secretary, Mothers of Soldiers Committee²

The draft contingent is inadequate, and people are winding up in the Army today who should not serve in it: the sick, drug addicts, criminals, the illiterate etc....

Retired General and Duma Deputy, E. Vorobiev.³

Introduction

This paper will examine the Fall 1997 conscription effort by the Russian military, and use it as a prism to highlight some of the current problems within the Russian armed forces. The Russian government continues to rely upon conscription to staff its military and has just completed the autumn 1997 effort to replenish the ranks. According to the 1993 version of the Russian constitution, all Russian males between the ages of 18-27 are obligated to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of two years. Despite plans and initiatives to move toward a professional/volunteer military, the Russian government has been unable to abolish its conscript military manning system.⁴ The chief obstacles remain within the realm of economics and

tradition. There is little money to move toward a professional military and the concept of mandatory military service remains entrenched within the Russian idea of citizenship.

According to the latest MOD reports, the Russian military was able to meet the 188,400 new recruit goal (113,000 to serve in the Armed Forces, with the remainder serving in the Border Forces, railway troops and other ministries). ⁵ However, even with this new influx of recruits, the Army and Navy will be staffed to only 80% of enlisted strength requirements. There are a number of factors why the Russian military has difficulty drafting new soldiers: the reluctance of Russian youth to serve in the military; the numerous deferments available to the smart and well-connected; the shrinking draft pool and the poor health of the draft-age contingent; the inability or unwillingness of civil authorities to prosecute those who avoid the draft; confusion regarding alternate forms of service; lack of funding to carry out the conscription effort; and recent legislation which prohibits potential soldiers from being conscripted if they have a criminal record. ⁶

Why They Don't Want to Serve

Russian military authorities continue to struggle to instill a sense of patriotism within the younger generation. Since the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Great Patriotic War in 1995, there has been no shortage of TV programs, periodicals, and museums dedicated to the Soviet triumph. The Ministry of Defense produces three different television programs and publishes a number of newspapers and magazines dedicated to military topics. ⁷ Despite the overt propaganda efforts, however, there remains a widespread reluctance to serve. This unwillingness stems from a variety of causes: the military disaster in Chechnya, continuing reports of military corruption and hazing, the austere conditions in which many new recruits are forced to live, and the curtailment of much of the pre-induction training which used to be part of the school curriculum. Whatever their feelings for their country, a large percentage of draft-age Russians see no point in spending two years in what has been categorized as "slave labor," where the average conscript monthly salary is less than \$10.00.

Since taking office in May 1997, the new Minister of Defense, Marshal Igor Sergeev, has adopted an optimistic, team-player approach to the problems facing the Russian military. ⁸ In contrast to his predecessor (General/Mr. Rodionov), the new MOD has gone out of his way to accentuate the positive and to work with the Yeltsin government toward concrete reform plans. Marshal Sergeev's efforts, however, are predicated upon a corresponding increase in defense spending. Reforming and downsizing the Russian military will not be a cost-free proposition. The estimated housing costs alone for demobilized officers in 1998 is billions of rubles short of the allocated amount. ⁹ Marshal Sergeev's plans to reform and create a modern, combat-ready military will fail if the government fails to honor its debts to the military (which in turn could spark a larger social unrest). ¹⁰

Though MOD officials have proclaimed the fall draft campaign a success, there are a number of factors which make these claims suspect. As the spring 97 draft results indicated, there has been a sharp deterioration of the draft process. ¹¹ Though the MOD met the number targets, the overall quality of the draft contingent has fallen sharply. A sizable percentage of the new recruits had health or mental problems (15% did not meet the minimum weight standards), 1/3 had not

finished secondary (high) school, 15% had some sort of criminal record, 10-15% were chronic drug and alcohol abusers and thousands continued to either evade the draft or to later desert from their units. ¹² A recent MOD official admitted that two out of every three conscripts from the most recent draft fall into the bottom two overall fitness categories, and that the intellectual level of new draftees has dropped 70% between 1993 and 1996. ¹³

Complicating the assessment of the conscription effort is the difficulty in obtaining an accurate headcount as to the actual number of conscripts serving within the Russian armed forces. Depending upon the source, the difference in figures is almost 100% percent. ¹⁴ It appears that this wide variance is not just a question of sloppy record-keeping. As the Russian novelist Gogol described more than 100 years ago, there are certain advantages in keeping "dead souls" on the record books. Salaries for a hundred soldiers go much further than that paid for merely fifty.

The Broken Conscript System

In its transition toward a different form of government and economic system, many Russians are questioning the need for the draft. (Indeed, as part of President Yeltsin's re-election campaign, he promised to end conscription and shift to a professional military by the year 2000). ¹⁵ These doubts are part of the larger confusion regarding the parameters and essence of the Russian state. In theory at least, up until six years ago, everything within Russia belonged to the "workers' state," where all means of production and distribution were held in common. In their rush to privatize state-owned property, however, no clear borders were established as to what property belonged to the state and what could be privatized. This privatization mania has also infected those whose primary duty was to employ force for the state. If the local police can moonlight as armed guards, then why can't soldiers be employed as cheap private labor? The state has not helped matters by delaying the payment of salaries. This damaged civil-military contract, combined with a tradition of bribery and a weak legal system, has not only resulted in extensive corruption among those wearing a uniform, but also in considerable confusion regarding the role and financing of the military.

This economic confusion has manifested itself in a number of different ways. Since the government was unable to settle its debts with the military, some military leaders have begun to look for other sources of income. Shortly before being relieved from office, MOD Rodionov appealed to the major Russian bankers and industrialists for economic assistance. His successor has adopted a similar tactic to encourage Russian business leaders to become involved with financing the Russian military. ¹⁶ Generating its own income by selling off some of its military assets is a key element to the current reform plan. The perception is that the military, like other formally subsidized areas of the Soviet economy, must now be able to fund itself. One important asset in this business equation is the relatively cheap labor costs provided by conscripts. ¹⁷

Corruption has reached record levels in all areas of the Russian government, to include the military and the draft-induction process. There is not a single area within the draft system which is not being exploited for bribes or extortion. Prospective draftees know the cost of purchasing a medical exemption during the initial physical screening. Bureaucrats who sit on the draft boards are more than willing to augment their meager incomes with a bribe to exempt a young man from service. College administrators who provide deferments are well compensated. Local law

enforcement authorities charged with "kidnaping" prospective draftees can be paid to lose their summons. Like everything else in Russian society today, the draft has been turned into a ruble-generating, "free-market" system.

The corruption hardly stops when a young Russian finally dons a uniform and begins his military service. To survive in today's Russian Army requires protection and the young soldier had better be willing to pay (either in labor or materiel). A portion of the recruit's training will likely be spent performing unpaid labor for his commanding officer. This "training" might take the form of building a summer cottage, guarding a personal home or helping to harvest the neighboring kolhoz's crops. Russia's conscript army remains one of the largest (practically unpaid) labor pools.

Apropos to this widespread corruption is the quasi-criminal mind set which permeates the military enlisted ranks, where senior, more experienced soldiers take brutal advantage of the new conscripts. Soldiers are abused daily, quite often with tragic consequences. The law and soldier's rights remain dependent upon the arbitrary judgement of the commander. ¹⁸ There has been some movement recently to crack down on this vicious habit of "dedovshina" or hazing, and hold those accountable for committing these crimes. ¹⁹ However, there is still little effective civilian oversight and the military remains accountable only to itself.

The declining health of the draft-age population is another factor which has had a negative impact upon the conduct of this fall's conscription effort. Russia is experiencing a grave reduction in the overall health of its population. The average life-span for males has now fallen to one of the world's lowest (average life expectancy for males-59 years). It is estimated that between one-fifth and one-third of all potential draftees are unable to meet the basic physical fitness standards. Some military units have been forced to establish special dietary camps, where the new recruits can put on additional weight before training begins. ²⁰

The MOD claims that to carry out the Fall 1997 draft effort cost an estimated 105 billion rubles (\$17,000,000), but only 32 billion were allocated. Local authorities presumably made up a portion of the shortfall. ²¹ The generosity of local officials has more to do with politics than patriotism. In meeting the draft quotas established by Moscow and providing for the decent processing of their future constituents, these local leaders hope to receive something in return. ²² This political capital may prove to be decisive in both future power-sharing agreements with Kremlin leaders and support from their draft-age constituents. A more ominous prognosis could interpret this as another step toward regional warlordism. ²³

In a very real sense, the Russian military is nearly professional. From the best estimates available, officers and contract soldiers (half of which are officers' wives) make up nearly two-thirds of the active force. Despite all of the problems associated with conscription, it will likely be the corporate interests of these professionals which will pose the greatest challenges to the Russian state. Unlike conscripts, officers and their families expect to be fairly well paid and fed.

There is a lingering belief among a sizable portion of the Russian population that despite the current economic difficulties, Russia remains a superpower. As such, Russia must have a military which reflects this status. An equally large portion of the population is no longer willing

to forego the beans and butter to buy more bullets. They are beginning to realize that mere military prowess alone is no measure of superpower status. The problems in carrying out the Fall 1997 draft characterizes this struggle over how to define Russia's status.

Implications for the United States Military

The problems with the fall 97 conscription effort reflect many of the problems currently confronting the Russian security establishment. While there may be a handful of combat-ready units, the overwhelming majority of Russian military forces are poorly trained, equipped, paid and led. Lack of available revenues have hampered the efforts of the political and military leadership from creating smaller, better trained and equipped armed forces. Improvement in this area is largely contingent upon stabilization and growth within the economic sector.

With regard to conventional forces, the Russian military presents only a minimal threat to the United States or to its allies for at least a decade.²⁴ However, there are a number of other non-conventional threat scenarios which merit vigilance. For instance, there is no guarantee that the drop in conscript quality will not effect the Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces. Even though conscripts do not have direct access to these weapons, they do help maintain the communications and logistic base which supports these systems. There are also indications that the link between organized crime and the military continue to expand, especially with regard to weapon sales. Whether conscript or general officer, dire economic straits will force the owners of these weapons to search for buyers. There will likely be a continued proliferation in weapons of mass destruction.

The problems with the draft will also effect the vibrancy of the US-Russian military partnership. To date, the Russian military leadership has hand-picked those units involved with training or working with their US counterparts. Some of the reluctance of the Russian military to play a more active role in combined exercises (i.e. Partnership for Peace), stems from economic considerations. By and large, the Russian political and military leadership are unwilling to admit their impoverished state to their former Cold War foe. This reluctance will aggravate future cooperative efforts in the military realm.

Endnotes

¹. "Krasnoy armyi net, a belyi bilet est" [The Red Army is no more, but the draft deferment remains], Komsomolskaya Pravda, 4 October 1997, p. 3. [BACK](#)

². Ilya Mil'shtein, "Polk 200" [Regiment 200](euphemism for soldier's coffin), Novoye Vremya, No. 23, 1997, pp. 6-9. The author of this article conducts an interview with the press-secretary of the Mothers of Soldiers Committee, an increasingly influential group which has been lobbying for soldiers' rights. This particular article is filled with dire statistics reflecting the lawless environment which exists in many military units. Despite all the clamor for reform, the lawless situation within the military does not seem to be improving. "According to Dyomin [the military procurator], a total of 1,027 military servicemen died in crime-related circumstances in the first nine months of 1997, compared to only 974 in the same period in 1996." See: Bronwyn

McLaren, "Military Hazing Decried," St. Petersburg Times, November 10-16 1997. Much of the lawlessness can be attributed to the poor quality of the conscription pool. [BACK](#)

³ Eduard Vorobiev, "The Law Must Not Make Military Service Harder," [BACK](#)

⁴ At the beginning of the 1990's an attempt was made on taking the first steps to create a professional army and a "contract" system was introduced. The experiment has failed for a number of reasons, not least of which was the government's inability to honor the wage stipulations of the contract. Of the current 230,000 soldiers under contract, half are women, mostly officers' wives. While the 1993 Russian constitution provides for alternate forms of military service, the legislation to support this provision has not materialized. In one of the latest drafts of this legislation being considered by the Russian Duma, it was proposed that those who opt for an alternate form of service, spend up to six years doing penal-type work in Siberia. See, "Shest let v Sibiri" [Six years in Siberia], Komsomolskaya Pravda, 29 October 1997, p. 4. For a good background article on the initial plan to reform the conscript system, see Stephen Foye, "Manning the Russian Army: Is Contract Service a Success?," RFE/RL Research Report, Vol 3, No. 13, 1 April 1994, pp. 36-45. Or consider this recent report from Bruce Pannier, "Alternative Service Difficult to Opt For," RFE/RL NEWSLINE, Vol 1, No. 191, Part I, 8 January 1998. The weekly "Ekspress-Khronika" reports in its latest issue that it is not very easy for Russians to be accepted for "alternative" rather than military service. Article 59 of the Russian Constitution provides for other forms of service in cases where personal convictions or religious beliefs prevent military activity. Over the past four years, the Duma Defense Committee has repeatedly shelved a law on alternative service, leaving those who decline military service at the mercy of local militia document checks aimed at determining whether an individual has been called up. "Violators" are usually brought to militia headquarters, sometimes more than once, to explain their actions. [BACK](#)

⁵ See Bruce Pannier, "Russia Military Call-Up a Success?," RFE/RL Newline, 21 January 1998 (on-line). [BACK](#)

⁶ "Of the 2.2 million young men subject to call-up for service duty, only 437,000 can actually start active service. Nearly 1.5 million are entitled to deferment, 225,000 of them for health reasons. Another 71,000 potential soldiers and sailors cannot be called up because they have committed serious crimes. However, 20,000 men who have received suspended sentences are sent to military units, with detrimental effect for the moral health of those units." See: Anatoliy Yurkin, "Russian Deputy Army Chief Comments on Law, Order in Army," ITAR-TASS, 27 Jan 98. [BACK](#)

⁷ If you can measure the bellicosity of any nation by the number of newspapers, magazines and TV shows dedicated to military topics, then Russia remains a martial country. One suspects, however, that the reader/viewer-ship of these military productions has fallen off significantly in the past decade. Besides the traditional Krasnaya Zvezda military newspaper, each uniformed ministry has at least its own paper and/or journal, as well as numerous local publications dealing with military topics. The three major weekly TV programs run by the MOD are Army Magazine, Prisyaga [Oath] and I Serve Russia. [BACK](#)

8. This is reflected most clearly in the content and tone of the aforementioned Russian military publications and news programs. Prior to Mr. Rodionov's dismissal as MOD, in an attempt to coerce the government to pay up its debts to the military, there was a constant stream of negative reports detailing the impoverished conditions within the Russian military. For example, during a six-month period (Oct 96-April 97), Krasnaya Zvezda published letters of complaints from soldiers, detailing the awful situation within the ranks. After General Sergeev assumed the MOD position, there was a sea change with regard to reflecting the situation in the military. Cries of despair and anger were replaced with success stories and words of encouragement. His promotion to Marshal was likely based (at least partially) upon his "can-do" attitude. [BACK](#)

9. Though not the subject of this paper, housing for discharged officers may be the Achilles heel of the current reform plan. The chief benefit of military service for an officer is the issuance of an apartment after 10 years of service. Though guaranteed by law, the state has been unable to satisfy the housing need for both active duty and retired officers. At last count, there were over 200,000 officers waiting for an apartment and this number could double as a result of the current reform/downsizing plan. The government is now proposing legislation which would grant deserving officers housing vouchers. Not surprisingly, this proposal is regarded with considerable skepticism by the military. See: Vladimir Georgiev, "Zhilishchnaia programma est', a sredstv na nee net" [There is a housing problem, but there are no funds for it], Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 23 Jan 98, p. 1. [BACK](#)

10. Though popular, making predictions concerning the volatile Russian body politic is nearly impossible. For every "expert" who claims that the general situation is beginning to improve, there is an equally-qualified expert who insists that the situation is becoming worse. 1998 may be a watershed year (for good or bad) in the Russian military. If the government fails to provide an adequate safety net (primarily housing) for the thousands of officers who will be forced to retire, the situation could become explosive (see note 7). There is no shortage of quasi-demagogues (General Rokhlin, General Gromov, Colonel Terekhov etc...) who could channel this dissatisfaction into violent protests. All the ingredients for mass protests are on hand, and one of the more likely scenarios pits the relatively well-paid internal troops against the impoverished and disgruntled regular forces of the MOD. On the other hand, should the government make good on its military reform promises and provides for these demobilized officers, the situation will likely remain under control. For a recent analysis of this topic, see: Andrey Kobut, "Imenitnye generaly pytayutsia ispol'zovat' nedovol'nyx ofisterov dlia polucheniya politicheskix dividendov" [Famous generals try to use the dissatisfaction of officers for political dividends], Nezavisimayia Gazeta, 9 Jan 1998, pp. 1-2. [BACK](#)

11. The ambiguous results of the Spring 97 draft effort, were also hailed by the MOD as a triumph. See: "Spring Conscription Campaign a Success," Military News Bulletin, No. 8 August 1997, pp. 14-15. [BACK](#)

12. The draft pool of healthy young Russian men appears to be shrinking quickly, as indicated by a host of frightening statistics. One in three potential conscripts is turned away for health reasons, and nearly 40% of those drafted do not meet army standards. See: Igor' Frolov, Aleksandr Shaburkin, "Problemy vesennei prizyvnoi kampanii" [Problems of the spring draft campaign], Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 16 July 1997, p. 2. [BACK](#)

¹³. Russian Television Program "Prisyaga", 0600 GMT, 14 Dec 1997. The official went on to say that commanders would find it very difficult to entrust most of these young men with weapons. During the past year, every week there has been new reports of some young soldier murdering his comrades or commander. According to a Noviy Izvestiya report, 50 Russian soldiers were killed by their fellow servicemen during 1997. Vladimir Isachenkov, "Hazing, Russia Deaths May Be Linked," AP, 29 Jan 98 (on-line). [BACK](#)

¹⁴. See, Andrew Duncan, "Time of Consolidation for Russia's Military," Jane's Intelligence Review, October 1997, pp. 453-456; and Viktor Litovkin, "Poyavilas' nadezhda, chto u Rossii budet sovremennaya armiya" [Hope appears, that Russia will have a modern army], Izvestiya, 18 July 1997, p.1. The figures for total military strength of the MOD varies anywhere from 792,000 as published in Jane's to 1,800,000 as published in the Russian newspaper, Izvestiya (relying on figures from the MOD). According to the above Izvestiya article, as of 1 Jan 1997, there were 911,441 "enlisted soldiers" working for the MOD (which includes contract soldiers, conscripts, and career soldiers). Of this total, the approximate number of conscripts within the MOD can be derived from multiplying the number of soldiers currently being drafted in the Fall 1997 conscription effort by a factor of four (4 draft calls = 2 years worth of mil svc): 113,000 slated for Fall '97 draft to MOD X 4 = 452,000 total conscripted-enlisted strength of Russian military. [BACK](#)

¹⁵. Due to funding constraints, however, the new MOD, Marshal Sergeyev, has declared that this will not be possible. See, Pavel Felgenhauer, "Defense Dossier: Time to Train Professionals," The Moscow Times, 29 Jan 98 (on-line). [BACK](#)

¹⁶. With the state coffers empty, the MOD has proposed a number of different options to generate much needed income. One of the more interesting proposals is for private business to help finance the military. Just how this would work is not clear, but indicates some of the confusion which exists between private business, the military and the Russian government. For more detailed examples of this confusion, see: Russian Television Program "Prisyaga," 0530 GMT 19 Oct 1997, which includes a report on a "conference of Army officers and Russian businessmen where they discussed how the two can collaborate so that more money is made available to the armed forces." Also see: Colonel Ivan Ivanyuk, "The Country's Defense is the Nation's Task. Bankers and Businessmen are Ready to Help the Defense Ministry," Krasnaya Zvezda, 17 Oct 97, p. 3 as translated in FBIS-UMA-97-293 (on-line). [BACK](#)

¹⁷. Like the Chinese military, some Russian military commanders have discovered other sources of income. For instance, the Russian Air Force earned more than \$25 million dollars in 1997 by renting out military equipment. See: Laurie Belin, "Air Force Turns to Unconventional Sources of Income," RFE/RL Newslines, 11 Jan 98 (on-line). Not all of these ventures are tainted by corruption. Many senior leaders are concerned with the welfare of their men and have spread the wealth around. For an interesting report on one of the more successful military entrepreneurs, see: Aleksandr Kislov, "Voennaia tayna generala Gromova" [The military secret of General Gromov], Izvestiya, 5 Nov 1997, p. 3. [BACK](#)

¹⁸. The Russian military appears to be at war with itself. In 1997 alone, there were hundreds of fatalities not attributable to accidents. Hardly a week goes by without another report of some

soldier going berserk and killing a number of his comrades. In 1996, the latest year for which the military provided statistics, 1,071 soldiers were murdered and 543 killed themselves. It is hardly surprising that the military has an image problem. See: Carol J. Williams, "Russian Soldier Runs Amok, Kills 7 at Remote Base," Los Angeles Times, 28 Jan 1998. One of the most destructive traditions of the Russian armed forces is that of "dedovshina" or hazing. This barbaric custom reflects not only the lawlessness within the ranks, but the cheap regard toward human life. Older soldiers treat new recruits as their slaves, forcing them to submit to every form of humiliation. Those that resist are beaten. See for instance the following ten pieces of advice given by two soldiers in their second year of service to new conscripts: 1. If a senior soldier or a sergeant should say "O.K., light 'em up," don't reply that you don't smoke or don't have any cigarettes. Quickly search around or borrow from a friend. The favorite brand of the "deds" (older soldiers) is L&M. 2. Never squabble with an officer. If he says black is white, then that's the way it is. 3. Forget about feeling stuffed during the first couple of months. 4. Don't even think about reporting incidents of hazing. 5. If your handwriting is good, keep it to yourself, or you'll find yourself doing all sorts of clerk duty. 6. If you go on leave, remember that your sergeants, like little children, expect a present. 7. If your parents come to visit, don't come back to the barracks empty-handed. 8-9. Train yourself to getting up and then falling out in 45 seconds. 10. Don't try to sound smart; the quicker you learn military slang, the better. Excerpted from A. Bestuzhev, "Kyrs molodogo boitsa: karatin" [The course of instruction for a young warrior: quarantine], Komsomolskaya Pravda, 4 Oct 97, p. 3. [BACK](#)

¹⁹. A recent segment from Army Magazine, a TV program dedicated to military topics, was dedicated to the subject of "dedovshina," where they advertised an "abuse hot-line" for abused soldiers to call. There have also been a number of articles in the MOD's written publications describing this lawless behavior and what commanders and soldiers should do to eradicate the problem. It appears that the Military Procurator is beginning to conduct on-site investigations to root out this criminal behavior. See: McLaren and Aleksandr Raskin, "Prosecutors Promise to Put End to Hazing," Kommersant-Daily, 5 November 1997, p. 6, as translated in FBIS-UMA-97-309 (on-line). [BACK](#)

²⁰. One of four recruits need special medical treatment and additional nourishment to regain normal weight. See: "Military Alarmed by State of Conscripts," Russia Today, 29 Jan 98 (on-line). [BACK](#)

²¹. "Defense Ministry on Results of Fall Call-Up," RIA Novosti, 27 Jan 98, as translated in FBIS-UMA-98-027 (on-line). [BACK](#)

²². Aleksandr Gol'tz, "Novobrantsy" [Recruits], Itogi, 21 October 1997, pp. 25-27. The governor of Tver, Vladimir Platov, not only saw his young draft-age constituents off at the rail station, but gave them a telephone number to call if they should become victims of "dedovshina". [BACK](#)

²³. See for instance, Nikolay Styazhkin, "Stavropol Authorities Want to Control Local Troops," ITAR-TASS, 11 Jan 98 as translated in FBIS-SOV-98-012 (on-line). Besides the creation of para-military Cossack groups where new recruits serve within the local areas, certain ethnic groups (besides the Chechens) have also begun to recruit, train and equip their local military

units. For instance, see: Mark Galeotti, "Growth of the North Caucasian armies," Jane's Intelligence Review, January 98, pp. 3-4. [BACK](#)

²⁴ For a very thorough analysis on the status of the Russian conventional forces, see: Stuart D. Goldman, "Russian Conventional Armed Forces: On the Verge of Collapse?," Congressional Research Service, 97-820F, 4 Sep 1997. [BACK](#)