



Conscription in Kazakhstan

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Kazakhstan has been working for a number of years to change the ranks of its armed forces from conscripts to contract soldiers, with the goal of eventually having a force made up almost entirely of contractors. The accompanying excerpted article reports on Kazakhstan's 2019 draft and provides insight into the government's efforts to reduce conscription.

The article, from the Russian-language website *Inform Buro*, discusses various aspects of the draft in Kazakhstan, including how “the armed forces are now made up of 70 percent contractor soldiers.” Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense previously stated that its goal was to have the armed forces made up of 99 percent contract soldiers by the end of 2016. While the statistic mentioned in the article shows that this has not yet been achieved, and the percentage of contract soldiers has been at around 70 percent for several years, one official interviewed stated that the “requirements for candidates are tightened every year.”

The article notes how the “draft is also influenced by how many contract soldiers have applied” and that if conscripts “have submitted a number of applications, then it reduces the number of soldiers needed” for the draft. The Kazakh Ministry of Defense has looked to entice conscripts into becoming contractors as one way to achieve its goal. While this may not be taking place at an increasing rate as planned, the article shows that the number of contract soldiers remains steady and that the government continues to utilize the draft to fill a portion of its ranks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Flag of the Kazakhstan Armed Forces.

Source: Ministry of Defense of Kazakhstan via Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armed_Forces_of_the_Republic_of_Kazakhstan#/media/File:Kazakhstan_Armed_Forces_Flag.svg, Public Domain

“The fact is that the armed forces are now made up of 70 percent contractor soldiers.”

Source: Adi Turkayev, “Призыв в армию – 2019. Всё, что нужно знать (Conscription in the army – 2019. Everything you need to know),” *Inform Buro*, 30 September 2019. <https://informburo.kz/cards/prizyv-v-armiyu-2019-vsyo-chto-nuzhno-znat.html>

Every year about 16 thousand young Kazakhstanis are conscripted for military service... The fact is that the armed forces are now made up of 70 percent contractor soldiers. Conscripts are a minority...“The requirements for candidates are tightened every year. The selection and distribution of conscripts to military units factors not only suitability, but also special skills acquire by them before the draft,” said the head of the department of defense affairs of Almaty, Amantai Userbayev...

The draft is also influenced by how many contract soldiers have applied. In most units, there is a mix: conscripts and contract soldiers. If the latter have submitted a number of applications, then it reduces the number of soldiers needed...

Young people from the ages 24 to 27 can go through alternative military service. This includes those who are fit for service or are partially fit for health reasons, as well as those who have a deferment from conscription. Training of these takes place in military-technical schools of the Ministry of Defense...Over the course of 35 days, recruits will be training in weapons specialties...“Every year we train 50 to 100 people at the military-technical schools...,” said Userbayev. At the end of training, recruits pass final exams and receive military tickets...