



Cracking Down on Draft-Dodgers

OE Watch Commentary: The Autumn 2019 conscription drive is in full swing, and from 1 October to 31 December, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) plans to draft 132,000 young Russian men into military service. Despite the massive public relations campaign over the past decade to improve the reputation of fulfilling conscript duty, a fair portion of young Russian men still try to avoid their mandatory one-year military obligation. The accompanying excerpts describe how the MoD is trying to crack down on those who try to dodge the draft.

The first excerpt from the popular daily *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, describes how defense officials are starting to target and prosecute the hundreds of online “services that provide ‘legal advice’” to help young Russian men avoid military service. To discourage young men from using these services, the article warns that many of these “websites... are engaged in fraud, receiving money for services that they obviously cannot provide,” and that law enforcement agencies are working to shut them down.

The second excerpt from the pro-Kremlin site *Izvestiya*, describes proposed legislation (due to be implemented by the end of the year) which will eliminate one of the more common draft-evasion ploys. Under the current legislation, as long as a young Russian male can avoid being served his draft notice (often by moving to another city), he can claim that he never received the conscription summons. Under the proposed amendment, “military commissars will register all young people in their area of responsibility... including those whose residence on the territory of the commissariat is not recorded in their passport.” This will allow military officials to draft those young men who have moved to avoid military service.

Finally, the third passage from the moderate news source *Novaya Izvestiya*, describes how during the recent unsanctioned protests in Moscow, law enforcement officials detained 300 draft-age young men who did not have a valid draft deferment. The article asserts that possible prosecution for draft-evasion “will be removed if the draftee reports to the military commissariat and completes all established recruiting measures.” If the young man is found to be fit, “he will be drafted and sent to the place of military service.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...In the fall, 132 thousand young people are expected to be called up for military service....”

Source: Artemy Sharapov, “Прокуратура рассказала о борьбе с нелегальными «военными юристами», помогающими «откосить» (The prosecutor’s office spoke about the fight against illegal ‘military lawyers’ helping to ‘dodge the draft’),” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 30 September 2019. <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2019/09/30/prokuratura-rasskazala-o-borbe-s-nelegalnymi-voennymi-yuristami-pomogayushhimi-otkosit.html>

...In the fall, 132 thousand young people are expected to be called up for military service.... The number of draft dodgers is declining, according to the Ministry of Defense. However, over the past period, the military prosecutor’s office initiated proceedings against 1,000 people, mainly draft-dodgers...

...The fight, as the representative of the Main Military Prosecutor’s Office (GWP) said, is taking place on several fronts at once. One of them, virtual, has moved into the IT sphere. So, the representative of the GWP, Colonel of Justice Dmitry Kostin, said that there has been an increase in the popularity of services that provide ‘legal advice’ to conscripts. In fact, they are engaged in fraud, receiving money for services that they obviously cannot provide.

As part of the fight against this kind of fraud, he said, military investigators work together with law enforcement agencies. They are constantly searching for fraud websites in order to block them....

Source: Roman Kretsul, Alexey Ramm, Alexey Kozachenko, “Определенное место жительства: в армию призовут даже без прописки (A specific place of residence: they will be drafted into the army even without registration),” *Izvestiya*, 20 September 2019. <https://iz.ru/923157/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko/opredelennoe-mesto-zhitelstva-v-armiiu-prizovut-dazhe-bez-propiski>

...Military commissars will register all young people in their area of responsibility. Including those whose residence on the territory of the commissariat is not recorded in their passport.... They are expected to enter into force at the end of this year, three sources in the military department said....

...These rules related to registration were actively used by young people who wanted to avoid military service — they simply changed their place of residence without informing anyone of this. As a result, the summons regularly sent by the military enlistment office did not find the addressee....

Source: “Либо уголовка, либо служи! Выбор для призывников, задержанных на протестных акциях (Either prison, or serve! Choice for draftees detained in protests),” *Novaya Izvestiya*, 26 September 2019. <https://newizv.ru/news/politics/26-09-2019/libo-ugolovka-libo-sluzhi-vybor-dlya-prizyvnikov-zaderzhannyh-na-protestnyh-aktsiyah/rrr>

...About 300 detainees from the unsanctioned protests in Moscow are conscript-age young men who do not have a right to a deferment; materials are being drawn up against them for prosecution for evading conscription....

...It is noted that the issue of prosecution will be removed if the draftee reports to the military commissariat and completes all established recruiting measures... following which he will be drafted and sent to the place of military service.