



New Regulations for Foreign Applicants to the Russian Armed Forces

OE Watch Commentary: Military service can be a shortcut to Russian citizenship, but the Russians are screening their foreign applicants to ensure that terrorists and criminals are not included in their ranks. Most of the foreign applicants are from former Soviet Central Asia. Armenia and Tajikistan host Russian military bases on their territory and have drawn local young men into the Russian Armed Forces. The accompanying passage from *Izvestia* discusses a new algorithm for the acceptance of foreigners for contract service. As the article notes, previously, foreign citizen applicants had to prove that they had not committed crimes and violations of the law on Russian Federation territory and also were not released from the Armed Forces based upon adverse circumstances. Now, “a mandatory check for involvement in organizations that are banned in Russia also awaits them.” The applicants’ biographies are scrutinized for such things as education, foreign relatives, language capability, involvement with “extremist or terrorist activity” and only after a positive finding can their application be processed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Military Department has developed a new algorithm for the acceptance of foreigners for contract service... The experts think that the procedure will help to weed out unreliable applicants.”

Source: Bogdan Stepovoi and Aleksei Ramm “At the Entrance of the Examination Contract Servicemen Will Pass a Test for Extremism. The Ministry of Defense Has Developed New Regulations for the Acceptance of Volunteers from Foreign Countries for Service in the Armed Forces,” *Izvestia*, 18 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/955336/bogdan-stepovoi-aleksei-ramm/na-vkhode-proverki-kontraktniki-proidut-test-na-ekstremizm>

At the Entrance of the Examination Contract Servicemen Will Pass a Test for Extremism. The Ministry of Defense Has Developed New Regulations for the Acceptance of Volunteers from Foreign Countries for Service in the Armed Forces

In order to apply for a vacant position in the Army or in the Navy, the applicant-foreigner needs to visit the Russian Armed Forces recruitment activity – they exist in all of the major cities. There, he will have to fill out the application: indicate that he is a citizen of which country, where he was born, what kind of education he has, have his relatives remained in his homeland, and also report his registration location in the Russian Federation and to submit documents that he is fluent in the Russian language at the proper level. The recruiters will transfer the personnel file to the RF Armed Forces Main Cadre Directorate and the FSB [Federal Security Service] regional administration. The “Guidance” indicates that intelligence service officers will ... check for involvement “with extremist or terrorist activity”. And the RF Armed Forces Main Cadre Directorate will establish whether the foreigner previously served in the Russian Army. All further processing will halt during the check. The leadership has not spelled out the precise time periods of the check... Processing an applicant into the ranks of the Armed Forces will continue only after confirmation from the competent agencies – a potential contract serviceman must not be linked with terrorists or extremists....

After the check, the volunteer will undergo a medical board and tests on physical fitness and psychological health. Based upon the results, he will ...be sent to a military unit.

More than 380,000 contract servicemen are performing service in the Armed Forces. The Military Department did not reveal how many are citizens of foreign states. Various estimates posit that there are several thousand...

*By 2025 the Ministry of Defense plans to bring the number of contract servicemen up to 475,000, including an increase in the percentage of foreigners. A foreigner’s right to conclude a contract was granted in 2017. The contract is in force for one term and Russian citizenship is required for contract renewal. *Izvestia* has previously reported that the Military Department has developed a simplified procedure to obtain [Russian citizenship] for good service.*

The check of the foreigners, who desire to serve in the Russian Army, is needed, according to Military Political Scientist Aleksandr Perendzhiyev.... After the defeat of the IS armed formations (the organization is banned in Russia) and a number of other terrorist organizations in Syria, the guerrillas have begun to return to their own countries – including to the Central Asian countries. “Our forces are partially manned by local residents in this region. The personnel of the Joint Russian Military Base in Kyrgyzstan and also of the 201st Base – in Tajikistan – are augmented in this way. These formations play an important strategic role, while ensuring stability. For example, the Russian units located near the Tajik Border defend the territory from the penetration of guerrillas from Afghanistan. Many terrorist organizations dream about including their agent network in these units – this would permit them to plan their actions with the maximum results....

The prestige of the Russian Federation Armed Forces is high in the countries of the former USSR and the majority of foreigners arrive in the Russian Army from there. The opportunity to master the state-of-the-art equipment and to make a career attracts these young men...