



Dodging the Draft

OE Watch Commentary: Despite the Kremlin’s massive propaganda surrounding the honor and merit of military service, a significant portion of young Russian men still look for ways to avoid their one-year term of mandatory conscript duty. The first accompanying excerpt from the centrist *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye* describes some of the challenges facing “military commissariats and local executive authorities” who are responsible for conscripting unwilling young Russians.

The author, who “dealt...with conscription issues in one of the districts of Moscow,” asserts that “the massive desire of young people to avoid conscription shocked me.” He goes on to complain that “the law on military service has no real enforcement mechanism” since to impose the fine, “first, the violator must be found.” Local authorities remain responsible for delivering the draft summons to the potential conscript, which the author refers to as a “thankless job,” since some young men “are not eager to receive a summons and do not open doors,” while others “rent an apartment in another area.”

The author then describes how “draft evasion has become a special kind of business,” where a simple search of the Internet will show young Russians that “it is quite legal to dodge the army.” He asserts that such businesses are “aimed at undermining the country’s defense capability.” After listing other problems with the current conscript system, the author concludes by claiming that the “main problem is the absence of state ideology, the absence of patriotic education,” which has “allowed our enemies to raise from our children a generation of rootless cosmopolitans who do not know the history of the country, who do not have spiritual values and ideals for which they could sacrifice their lives.”

The second excerpt from the popular daily, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* describes how the local draft commission in Kursk came up with a novel way to help deliver the draft summons. Instead of a uniformed official knocking on doors of prospective conscripts, they enlisted the help of “a 17-year-old woman,” who “goes from door to door and hands the summons to the guys.” According to the headline, she has helped to bring “30 conscripts to the military registration and enlistment office.” Explaining her motive, the young woman remarked, “I respect the young men who serve in the army. I believe that this is an honorable duty, therefore I decided to help during the autumn conscription.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“... The massive desire of young people to avoid conscription shocked me....”



Army conscription commission during the COVID-19 pandemic in Russia, Samara region, May 2020.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7FZudc0AVA>, CCA 3.0 Unported



Continued: Dodging the Draft

Source: “Как вразумить уклониста (How to dissuade the draft dodger),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 29 October 2020. https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-10-29/3_1115_army.html

On October 1, the autumn conscription of young people aged 18 to 27 began in the country's Armed Forces. In military commissariats and local executive authorities, a hot time has come. They are entrusted with the task of finding and informing conscripts about the need to visit the military registration and enlistment office of their area to undergo a medical commission.

Many young people are reluctant to do this.... At the end of September, the capital's councils received a plan to search for those unwilling to serve. How this happens, I know firsthand, since from 2010 to 2013 I myself was in the civil service in the Moscow government and dealt, in particular, with conscription issues in one of the districts of Moscow. The massive desire of young people to avoid conscription shocked me....

...Unfortunately, the law on military service has no real enforcement mechanism. After all, fines must be collected from someone and, first, the violator must be found... This is a thankless job. Residents are not eager to receive a summons and do not open doors. Some of the conscripts leave for the time of the call to relatives or rent an apartment in another area....

...Assisting draft evasion has become a special kind of business. Go to the network and type: “Draft evasion”, and you will get a lot of proposals “it is quite legal to dodge the army.” These assistants seek out conscripts for diseases that exclude conscription, according to the approved registry of diseases...

...Indeed, in fact, this business is aimed at undermining the country's defense capability....

...Our main problem is the absence of state ideology, the absence of patriotic education. Having eliminated the subject “Basic military training” in secondary school, our schools stopped training recruits ready to defend the Fatherland. By abolishing ideology, we allowed our enemies to raise from our children a generation of rootless cosmopolitans who do not know the history of the country, who do not have spiritual values and ideals for which they could sacrifice their lives.

Source: “Курская школьница привела в военкомат 30 призывников (Kursk schoolgirl brought 30 conscripts to the military registration and enlistment office),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda (Kursk)*, 20 October 2020. <https://www.kursk.kp.ru/daily/217193/4307361/>

...An original way of presenting summons to recruits to the military registration and enlistment office was invented in the Kursk region. If a nice girl rings a bell at the guy's door, then, most likely, he will be glad to see her and will open the door. And here - a summons from the military registration and enlistment office.

Anna Tselikova, a 17-year-old woman from Kursk, has successfully handed over several dozen summons to the conscripts of the “city of atomic workers” of Kurchatov, Kursk region. Anna in this autumn call, which started on October 1 in the country, decided to work as a “volunteer” in the military registration and enlistment office. The girl goes from door to door and hands the summons to the guys....

“I respect the young men who serve in the army. I believe that this is an honorable duty, therefore I decided to help during the autumn conscription,” said Anna when she was invited to the military registration and enlistment office to present her with a certificate for her excellent work....

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