

Russia Pushing to Classify Reporting on the Military

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

There's little question that the Russian military has improved its combat capabilities over the past several years. Alongside this enhanced military readiness, however, have been measures to classify reporting on military topics. The first excerpt from the pro-business source Kommersant describes a draft law that would severely restrict any "information about the passage of citizens military service, procurement, and 'the moral and psychological climate in the troops.'" While this draft legislation has yet to become law, it does reflect the growing trend to restrict writing on military topics—especially any negative reporting.

The second excerpt from the official news agency Interfax describes a recent assessment by the "Moscow City Military Prosecutor" regarding crime in the ranks. According to this official, "the number of cases of beatings and manifestations of hazing in the troops of the Moscow region again increased." This official also "noted 'a number of negative tendencies' regarding officers' crimes, asserting that there's been an increase in fraud..., malfeasance in office, and also petty bribery." Should the draft legislation described above become law, reporting on military problems like crime in the ranks could become classified.

“In the situation with officers' crime, the prosecutor also noted “a number of negative tendencies: ...the number of frauds committed by them, malfeasance in office, and also petty bribery have increased.”

Source: “ФСБ составила список военных сведений, которые иностранцы могут использовать против РФ (The FSB compiled a list military information that foreigners can use against the Russian Federation),” *Kommersant* (pro-business source), 19 July 2021. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4908950>

The FSB has developed a draft list military information that foreign states, organizations or citizens can use against Russia. Among them there is information about the passage of citizens military service, procurement and “the moral and psychological climate in the troops....

Source: “Военный прокурор сообщил о росте дедовщины в московском регионе (The military prosecutor reported on the growth of hazing in the Moscow region),” *Interfax* (official news agency), 4 August 2021. <https://www.interfax.ru/moscow/782501>

After a significant decline in hazing in 2021, the number of cases of beatings and manifestations of hazing in the troops of the Moscow region again increased, Moscow City Military Prosecutor Vladislav Prihodchenko told Interfax. He added that “these crimes make up only 6% of the total number of recorded criminal acts.”

According to him, “the greatest propensity” to assault and hazing, “was shown by the soldiers and sergeants doing military service by conscription.”

In the situation with officers' crime, the prosecutor also noted “a number of negative tendencies: ...the number of frauds committed by them, malfeasance in office, and also petty bribery have increased.”

“For example, the head of a medical company of one of the military units deployed in the Moscow region was convicted of six episodes of petty bribery.” He also noted the growth of corruption in the region and linked it with bribery in military enlistment offices....