

Source: “Долг ли долг: срочная служба глазами вчерашнего солдата (How long is the duty: conscript service through the eyes of yesterday’s soldier),” *Echo Moscow (liberal Russia based radio station)*, 4 July 2021. <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/assembly/2864544-echo/>

Interview with Daniil Ruvinsky, reserve corporal.

I discovered that conscript duty was not so bad, but I would not go through it again.... While I was a conscript, we did not do much in the way of military training, but our unit did visit the firing range on a monthly basis, from June through November...

The officers in my unit were quite concerned about hazing and took extra measures to prevent any incidents.... Yes, we had a political-military officer who helped with personnel issues but did not provide any sort of agitation/propaganda....

The conscript pay (2,700 rubles) was barely sufficient to cover necessities... The food was decent, thanks to the efforts of the cooks. The only things in short supply were fresh fruits and vegetables.... We were allowed to use basic phones (no camera/Internet) twice a week (Thursdays and Sundays), but more frequently if the need required....

Our unit was lacking the requisite number of contract soldiers, so we conscripts were under consistent pressure to consider becoming contract soldiers.... From what I could tell, most of those who signed as contract soldiers, came from depressed economic regions, and had few opportunities outside the military.

99% of those young Russian men who enroll to attend university after high school are partially motivated by the desire to avoid conscription.... Based on my experience, it would be more advantageous to complete conscript duty directly after high school, so it doesn’t interfere with post-university career plans.... All in all, my experience as a conscript soldier was a wasted year and I learned nothing valuable while in the military.

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Recent Russian Conscript Shares His Largely Negative Experience



Conscripts from Moscow preparing for duty, November 2020.

https://stat.mil.ru/russian_peacekeeping_forces/brief/more.htm?id=12325824@egNews&_print=true Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Despite major improvements in equipping, training, and caring for conscript soldiers, many young Russian men remain reluctant to complete their mandatory one-year military obligation. The reasons are many, but most stem from the loss of personal freedom and the rigors of conscript duty. A young Russian who had just completed his year-long conscript duty in the army shared his experiences in a recent interview on the Moscow-based liberal radio station *Echo Moscow*. Some of his comments merit attention: rarely published and presumably his impressions are not filtered by the Kremlin.

This former soldier begins by stating that “conscript duty was not so bad, but I would not go through it again.” He had been assigned to a non-combat unit in the Moscow region where most of the time was spent on guard duty and work details. While basic military training was not a priority, he remarked that his “unit visited the firing range on a monthly basis from June through November.” The officers in his unit were “quite concerned about hazing” and took extra measures to prevent any incidents. His unit had a political-military officer assigned who helped with personnel issues but “did not provide any sort of agitation/propaganda.” Conscripts were permitted to use basic phones (no camera/internet) twice a week. Conscript pay (2,700 rubles or \$37 per month) was “barely sufficient to cover necessities,” though many of his fellow soldiers could still afford to smoke. He described the food as decent and praised the cooks who prepared their meals. While the meals were filling, he complained of a lack of fresh vegetables and fruit.

Since his unit lacked the requisite number of contract soldiers, “conscripts were under consistent pressure to consider becoming contract soldiers.” He surmised that most who signed as contract soldiers, “had few opportunities outside the military.” He asserted that “many young Russian men enroll in the university to avoid conscription,” recommending that future conscripts should complete their obligatory military service right after high school. He had waited until after college, which then interfered with his career plans. He concluded on a rather negative note, claiming that conscript duty had been “a wasted year and that I learned nothing valuable while in the military.”