



Closing Conscript Loopholes

OE Watch Commentary: Despite the persistent Kremlin propaganda claiming that Russia is increasingly threatened by external enemies, and that military service to defend the motherland is a sacred duty, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) continues to experience difficulties conscripting young Russian men to complete their required one-year term of military service. Besides staying in school (education deferments), young Russian men try to dodge the draft by hiding their whereabouts. The accompanying excerpt from the relatively centrist news source, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, describes proposed legislation which will close two loopholes for those hoping to evade mandatory military service.

The article describes a new requirement which will “oblige conscripts to come to military commissariats themselves for their summons to serve in the army,” rather than having military officials track down and deliver the draft notice to the often unwilling young men. The second measure to tighten the draft deals with how the MoD registers those young Russians who have evaded military service and have passed the draft age (27 years). Up until now, such individuals were issued a “certificate in exchange for a military ticket,” which precluded such individuals from working in “large state institutions and commercial companies that select personnel based on government standards.” However, these military certificates have recently been deemed as unlawful by the “Supreme Court of the Russian Federation,” and are therefore no longer being issued “in a number of regions.” In response, the MoD has turned to the Russian legislature to pass a law to close this loophole, and as the article points out, “it is expected that in September this bill will be adopted as a whole and signed by the president.”

The allusion to “wolf tickets” in the title of the article refers to the certificates which document that a Russian male has evaded military service. As the article points out, such a black mark will make “it difficult to find a job,” and “will affect the interests of several hundred thousand educated young people.” Many of these young Russian males remained in school during their draft period (ages 18-27). An expert quoted in the article maintains that such a penalty will induce future college educated Russian men “to choose to serve in the army or the navy.”

The article concludes by referring to the country’s current economic strains and how the shortage of funding has hampered military plans to “transition to a contractual basis.” For the foreseeable future, military service via conscription will remain an essential requirement for young Russian men, even the most highly educated, and as this article illustrates, avoiding this duty will incur significant penalties. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Despite the optimistic reports of the RF Ministry of Defense on the results of the spring draft, the army still has a shortage of conscript soldiers.”

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, “Военкоматы продолжают выдавать уклонистам ‘волчьи билеты,’” (Military registration and enlistment offices will continue to issue evaders ‘wolf tickets’), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 7 August 2018. http://www.ng.ru/politics/2018-08-07/8_7283_ticket.html

Despite the optimistic reports of the RF Ministry of Defense on the results of the spring draft, the army still has a shortage of conscript soldiers. This is due not only to the demographic pit, but also to the fact that a large number of young people continue to evade conscription. According to military sources, in connection with this, the military department has developed a number of measures related to increase the number of conscripts.

...Nezavisimaya Gazeta has already written that the Duma Defense Committee is preparing amendments to the legislation that will oblige conscripts to come to military commissariats themselves for summons to serve in the army....

The Ministry of Defense also introduced a measure (Order No. 495) whereby a certificate was issued to “citizens who, having reached the age of 28, avoided conscription into the army and under the law, can no longer be called upon. According to open sources, such certificates have been issued to several tens of thousands of young people....

At first glance, a purely departmental change has occurred, but obtaining such a certificate deprives a young person of the opportunity to work for 10 years in the government, as well as in large state institutions and commercial companies that select personnel based on government standards....

Parents of such young men naturally began to write to all departments to petition about the alleged illegality of Order No. 495. And this year the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, considering specific cases on this matter, recognized as unlawful the decision of one of the conscription commissions to issue “evader references” to young people. In fact, now the issuance of such certificates in a number of regions is frozen. But in the military, the situation is viewed with optimism. As early as March 2018, a group of members of the Federation Council submitted to the State Duma amendments to the Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service,” which proposed the introduction of electronic documents for military registration of citizens subject to military registration, as well as issuing certificates instead of a military ticket (proof of service)....

On July 12, 2018, Duma deputies almost unanimously considered and approved the relevant amendments to the law “On Military Duty and Military Service” in the first reading without any special commotion.... It is expected that in September this bill will be adopted as a whole and signed by the president. Thus, the military registration and enlistment offices will have legal grounds for issuing “draft-dodger certificates” to young people.

“I call these certificates ‘wolf tickets’ for young careerists. With them, even a male school teacher will find it difficult to find a job. What will he teach the children if he himself has avoided military service for 10 years?” said the military expert Colonel Alexander Sekachev. In his opinion, this legislative initiative of the Ministry of Defense will affect the interests of several hundred thousand educated young people. “This is a very large penalty. Therefore, I think, many guys in our country who want to make a good career, will think better and will themselves find a reason to serve in the army or the navy,” Sekachev said.

The army’s transition to a contractual basis requires money. In our country, under conditions of sanctions and economic crisis, there is clearly not enough. At the same time, an increase in the recruitment base in Russia solves many, including economic, problems in ensuring the country’s defense....