



Cleaning Up the Professional Ranks

OE Watch Commentary: Russia continues to slowly move toward developing a professionally-staffed military. While young Russian males (age 18-27) are still subject to one-year conscription, the total size of the draft contingent continues to shrink. As the excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source *RIA Novosti* describes, during the Spring 2018 draft period (which runs from 1 April to 15 July) only “128,000 people are called for in the forthcoming campaign, which is 10% less” than the Spring 2017 campaign. As the article points out, as far back as the Spring 2015 draft, there are now more contract soldiers in the Russian military than conscripts.

The military has also undertaken measures to improve the overall quality of the professional contingent (officers and enlisted contract personnel). Besides improving living conditions, pay and benefits, the military is also making it easier for commanders to discharge service members for various forms of misconduct. The excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin source *Izvestiya* points out that “commanding officers will [soon] receive the right to use a simplified procedure to dismiss their subordinates for abuse of alcohol and drugs, improper conduct, corruption, or divulging unclassified official information.”

The article points out that the current regulation “does not stipulate the possibility of dismissing service members for misdemeanors that are corruption-related or involve divulging official information” nor does it “make provision for punishment for acts that discredit the honor and dignity of a service member.” Under the current system, commanders must “demonstrate that [the offending soldier] has repeatedly infringed the terms of his contract” which can force “the dismissal process...[to] drag on for months.” The article quotes an expert and advocate for soldiers’ rights, who asserts that provisions under which a soldier might be discharged “must be clearly described in legislation, with an exhaustive list of such infringements,” suggesting that otherwise soldiers may be subject to the arbitrary decisions of commanding officers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Commanding officers will receive the right to use a simplified procedure to dismiss their subordinates for abuse of alcohol and drugs, improper conduct, corruption, or divulging unclassified official information.”

Source: “Весенний призыв: 128 тысяч новобранцев к 100-летию российских военкоматов (Spring Draft: 128 thousand recruits for the 100th anniversary of the Russian military registration and enlistment offices),” *RIA Novosti*, 1 April 2018. https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20180401/1517692734.html

...For the first time the number of contractors (about 300 thousand) exceeded the number of “conscripts” (about 280 thousand) in the spring of 2015... Personnel Chief Lieutenant-General Yevgeny Burdinsky addressed the media on March 30 with explanations on the draft, called “Spring-2018.” One of the features of the current spring campaign, he called a significant reduction in the number of drafted.

“If in the spring of 2017 142 thousand recruits were sent to the army, 128 thousand people are called for in the forthcoming campaign, which is 10% less.” The reduction in the rate is primarily due to the increase in the Armed Forces of the proportion of military personnel under the contract,” Burdinsky stressed.

Source: Aleksandr Kruglov and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Военных обяжут беречь честь и достоинство (Military Will Have Obligation To Safeguard Honor and Dignity),” *Izvestiya*, 6 March 2018. <https://iz.ru/715007/aleksandr-kruglov-bogdan-stepovoi/voennykh-obiashut-berech-chest-i-dostoinstvo>

Commanding officers will receive the right to use a simplified procedure to dismiss their subordinates for abuse of alcohol and drugs, improper conduct, corruption, or divulging unclassified official information. The Defense Ministry told Izvestiya that the military department has proposed the corresponding amendments to the Federal Law on Military Obligation and Military Service. These changes are currently at the stage of coordination. In the opinion of experts the aim of the new legislative rules is to increase requirements on service members. But certain clauses of the draft law need to be made more specific in order to avoid abuses....

...The current version of the Law on Military Obligation and Military Service does not stipulate the possibility of dismissing service members for misdemeanors that are corruption-related or involve divulging official information. The law also does not make provision for punishment for acts that discredit the honor and dignity of a service member....

...At present, in order to dismiss a service member, it is necessary to demonstrate that he has repeatedly infringed the terms of his contract. One condition is the existence of several disciplinary penalties. Because of this, the dismissal process can drag on for months. By means of the amendments it is proposed to eliminate this legislative loophole and grant commanding officers the right to dismiss offenders in accordance with a simplified procedure.

...Sergey Krivenko, leader of a working group on questions of the protection of service members’ rights at the Council Under the President of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Civil Society and Human Rights, believes that service members’ standard contracts include many references to statutes and federal laws regulating the life of the Army, but not much in the way of specifics.

“The concept of ‘acts that discredit the honor and dignity of a service member’ must be clearly described in legislation, with an exhaustive list of such infringements,” Sergey Krivenko believes. “The statutes do not indicate specifically what actions can be considered as such. This concept can be interpreted in various ways. The same goes for the clause concerning official information. There have been cases where complaints by soldiers and officers to the military prosecutor’s office have been assessed in that way by superior officers.”