



## Increase in Pay and Benefits for Contract Soldiers

**OE Watch Commentary:** Three years ago, Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) officials celebrated the milestone of having enlisted more contract soldiers (approximately 300,000) than conscripts (276,000) into the ranks. At the time, some observers suggested that the Russian military was well on its way to reaching its target of approximately 450,000 contract soldiers by 2020, and possibly moving toward a totally professionally staffed military. Retention problems, however, have so far stymied efforts to reach the 450,000 goal. In the brief excerpt from the mostly pro-Kremlin daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, military journalist Victor Baranets describes a recent pay increase (effective 1 September 2019) and expansion of other benefits for contract soldiers which might help the MoD to reach this objective.

Citing data from *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Baranets reports that “the average monthly pay for an ordinary soldier and sergeant who undergo contract military service will increase from the current base salary of 20–40 thousand rubles [\$312–\$625] to 30–50 thousand rubles [\$469–\$781] or more,” depending on years of service, assignment and specialty allowances. He goes on to point out that housing allowances for contract soldiers will also increase “from the current 3,900 rubles [\$61] to 12,800 rubles [\$200] (depending on the locality).” Baranets also predicts that the MoD will soon enact legislation “which will provide for the provision of the right to travel free of charge to the place of vacation and back for contract military personnel” and to possibly expand “the categories of citizens who are eligible to choose a two-year contract military service in lieu of one-year conscript duty.”

Some of the reader comments to this article reflect both positive and negative reactions toward placing greater emphasis on using contract soldiers. One reader suggested that Russians living in depressed regions look at contract military service “not only for a decent salary and benefits, ...but as a social ladder to improve their prospects.” Conversely, another reader disparaged the notion of a contract service, remarking that “the contract soldier is not a professional.... A professional is a military man with many years of specialized education and service experience. The contract soldier is someone who has not found himself in life, has no education, and is not capable of anything.”

Over the past decade, the Kremlin has devoted considerable resources toward improving military readiness and modernization. A key component of this increased military focus has been on developing well-trained, professional soldiers. While the mandatory one-year period of conscription for Russian men (ages 18-27) will likely remain a requirement for the foreseeable future, it appears that the Kremlin leadership is continuing to construct the necessary incentives to attract more professional soldiers into the ranks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“...they are joining the army not only for a decent salary and benefits, which are unavailable in depressed regions, but as a social ladder to improve their prospects....”*

**Source:** Victor Baranets, “Сколько будут платить контрактникам (How much will contract soldiers be paid),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 2 August 2019. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27010.1/4072488/>

*...The average amount of money allowance for an ordinary soldier and sergeant who undergo military service under the contract will increase from the current 20–40 thousand rubles to 30–50 thousand rubles or more, reports Krasnaya Zvezda. And this will bring the social guarantees of this category of military personnel closer to those of officers and warrant officers.*

*This will be especially noticeable after a significant increase in the average amount of compensation payments for housing rental from the current 3.9 thousand rubles to 12.8 thousand rubles (depending on the locality).*

*But that is not all. The military department intends to amend the Federal Law “On the status of military personnel”, which will provide for the provision of right to travel free of charge to the place of vacation and back for military personnel undergoing military service under the contract in the ranks of non-commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as military cadets educational organizations regardless of the place of military service.*

*...In addition, the issue of amending the Federal Law of 1998 No. 53-FZ “On Military Duty and Military Service” is being worked out in terms of expanding the categories of citizens who are presented with the right of alternative choice - to perform military service under the contract for two years instead of service by call. Today, this norm, recall, applies only to citizens with higher and secondary vocational education.*

**Reader Comments:**

*Sdelka*

*...they are joining the army not only for a decent salary and benefits, which are unavailable in depressed regions, but as a social ladder to improve their prospects....*

*Pavel*

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