



## Serving in the Presidential Regiment

**OE Watch Commentary:** For visitors to Moscow, one of the more impressive sights is the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, located in the Alexander Garden adjacent to the Kremlin. Like honor guards in other countries, these uniformed sentries stand a silent watch over the memorial to those who paid the ultimate price in defending their country. In a recent interview in Russia's main government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the new commander of the Presidential Kremlin Regiment, Major General Andrei Filyakin, describes the selection process, social background, and career prospects for soldiers assigned to this unit.

The new commander points out that conscripts make up overwhelming majority of the servicemen in this regiment, and that they draw their new members from all over Russia. This regiment, however, is not a part of the Ministry of Defense, but belongs to the Federal Protective Service (FSO) [Федеральная служба охраны] which has the responsibility of guarding the Kremlin and several high-ranking officials. After describing the four-month training process to transform a conscript into "a ceremonial guard" capable of participating in a ceremony, the commander reviews the selection criteria. "Six months before the draft, a candidate for our regiment, undergoes the necessary verification and interviews with the FSO, FSB [Federal Security Service] and officers of the regiment." Prospective members must come from a stable family, be in excellent physical health, a solid academic record, and have no record of disciplinary problems.

The commander goes on to describe the social background of most of the guards, pointing out that they draw their "soldiers are from families with middle and lower middle incomes: children of workers and farmers..." He comments that despite the prestige of the Kremlin Regiment, "we have no children of ministers and deputies," although he does point out that "the number of draftees with higher education sharply increased." He concludes by touching upon the career prospects for those conscripts who complete their year serving in this ceremonial unit. For those who don't yet have a college degree, after six months of service, they can apply to become a contract soldier with the unit. For those conscripts who already have a college degree, the commander asserts that they can become contract officers in the regiment.

Over the past several years, the image and prestige of those wearing a Russian military uniform has risen significantly. Aware that they represent Russia, those serving in the elite Kremlin Presidential Guard Regiment, continue to set the highest ceremonial standard. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

*“Basically, our soldiers are from families with middle and lower middle incomes: children of workers and farmers...”*



Honor Guard at the Eternal Flame at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow.

Source: ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Пост\_№\_1#/media/Файл:Почетный караул у Вечного огня на могиле Неизвестного солдата в Москве.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

**Source:** Igor Yelkov, "Кремлевский шаг (Kremlin step)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 3 September 2019. [rg.ru/2019/09/03/general-major-andrej-filiakin-rasskazal-kak-stat-komandiro-m-prezidentskogo-polka.html](http://rg.ru/2019/09/03/general-major-andrej-filiakin-rasskazal-kak-stat-komandiro-m-prezidentskogo-polka.html)

*Andrei Filyakin has already been in office for a year and a half, has grown to the rank of Major General, but has not yet given a single interview. More precisely, until today...*

*...Among those we saw today, were there many guys drafted last fall?*

**Andrei Filyakin:** *Of the 67 servicemen from the regiment present on Red Square, 13 are contract soldiers, to include three officers, and the rest are conscripts. The entire formation handling the carbines is comprised of conscripts; in December 2018, they took the oath. In January, we began their training as a ceremonial guard. Until April, drill training took place, then they began to participate in the posting of foot and horse guards on Cathedral Square. In early May, they entered into service at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier: post number 1 in the Alexander Garden.*

*...Back to your soldiers. Where are they from, from which regions?*

**Andrei Filyakin:** *In our regiment, service is carried out both on contract and on conscription. I always say: the draftee-soldier in our regiment is the main soldier. We conscript from different regions.... In total, we have conscripts from 46 different cities. Six months before the draft, a candidate for our regiment, undergoes the necessary verification and interviews with the FSO, FSB [Federal Security Service] and officers of the regiment...."*

*Are the requirements very stringent?*

**Andrei Filyakin:** *They are tough. We kept all the requirements for the draftee that were in the Kremlin regiment. Of course, a young man must be completely healthy. Everything is important: external data, from which family, where and how he studied, what lifestyle he led prior to being drafted. If you did not study or work, then questions will immediately arise....*

*And the social composition? Now the army is very popular, parents are literally trying to push their children in. Probably, those of the elite push very persistently.*

**Andrei Filyakin:** *Basically, our soldiers are from families with middle and lower middle incomes: children of workers and farmers... We have no children of ministers and deputies. There are some from the families of military and other law enforcement agencies, but every year there are fewer. On the contrary, the number of draftees with higher education sharply increased...*

*...After the dismissal, a soldier has a chance to enter a university, and this is also an incentive. And what is the incentive for a soldier with higher education?*

**Andrei Filyakin:** *Many of them sign up as contract soldiers. Having higher education, he can count on an officer post. And experience has shown that contract soldiers must be taken from the soldiers who served in our regiment. Having served in the Presidential Regiment, a person can objectively assess their capabilities and requirements. We are in the structure of the Federal Security Service, we have our own specifics. It happens like this. After six months of service, a conscript soldier may write a request for contract service. If the command considers him worthy, then he passes the test. In all aspects, only tougher than when he was a draftee. If everything is fine, then we conclude the first contract for three years....*