

Hazing Soars 16% in Military

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Hazing in the army rose more than 16 percent last year, with ethnic tensions contributing increasingly, the chief military prosecutor said Friday.

Sergei Fridinsky did not provide exact statistics but said "thousands" faced abuse, "dozens" were crippled, and some were murdered. More than 50 officers were imprisoned over hazing incidents.

The trend persisted this year, with 500 hazing cases opened in the first two months of this year, Fridinsky [said](#) in a statement carried by his agency's web site. Two conscripts were killed; 20 were injured.

The increase in the overall number of conscripts played a part, he said. The military is currently drafting twice the number of young men it had been drafting before 2008, when the service term was halved from two years to one.

But "obviously lacking work of commanders" is also to blame, he said at a meeting with military top brass and rights groups in Moscow.

Some officers condone "servicemen of different ethnic groups ... attempting to impose their own rules in military communities," Fridinsky said without elaborating. The claim echoed a popular belief that conscripts from ethnic republics, especially in the North Caucasus, antagonize fellow draftees of different origins.

The General Staff was said last fall to be considering the idea of creating special "monoethnic" regiments comprised solely of North Caucasus natives, but no follow-up was reported.

Hazing should be overcome by educational courses for officers, who will be taught to handle subordinates better, as well as better investigation work, Fridinsky said.

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