

Army Cuts Number of Conscripts

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The military will significantly reduce the number of conscripts called up in the fall conscription drive amid difficulties finding a sufficient number of young men due to poor health and draft evasion, the General Staff said.

The military intends to call up 136,000 conscripts during the fall draft, which lasts from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, compared with the more than 218,000 conscripts pressed into service in the spring draft, General Staff deputy head Vasily Smirnov [told](#) reporters Friday.

Smirnov said the reduction in the number of conscripts is aimed at "boosting the quality of the entrants" amid a military reform and will be compensated by a growing number of contracted military personnel, Interfax reported.

Smirnov said the 136,000 conscripts would "fully cover the demand of the armed forces."

The General Staff called up about 280,000 conscripts in fall 2010 and more than 305,000 in fall 2009.

Smirnov also said 34.8 percent of conscript-age people were not eligible for military service because of poor health in the spring draft, an increase from 33 percent in 2010.

Moreover, 203,500 young men went into hiding so that draft notices could not be served to them in the spring, Smirnov said. In addition, about 7,300 young men who received the notices still did not show up for duty, he said.

Meanwhile, the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office opened a preliminary investigation into the hospitalization of 40 conscripts with pneumonia in the Voronezh region in late September, RIA-Novosti [reported](#) Friday, citing senior military prosecutor Alexander Nikitin.

It was not immediately clear what caused the outbreak.

Two soldiers earlier died of an unidentified acute respiratory viral infection in the same military unit, one in September and the other in July, the report said.

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