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Russia to Dole Out Pensions to WWII Veterans in Baltic States

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Some 12,000 World War II veterans still live in the Baltic states, according to Delfi.lv, a Latvian news site.

The Russian government has approved the payment procedure for its financial support of World War II veterans residing in the ex-Soviet Baltic states, according to a document published Thursday on its official information website.

The lifelong monthly payments, set to begin in January 2015, have gotten the go-ahead following President Vladimir Putin's decree in May on the "improvement of material conditions" for war veterans in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. According to the decree, Russia will provide veterans with up to 1,000 rubles ($20) a month through Russia's Pension Fund in the national currency of the Baltic states.

Despite the seemingly kind gesture, however, Baltic governments have expressed concern that Russia is attempting to shift their Russian-speaking populations' loyalty toward the Kremlin and fuel linguistic and historical tensions that have dominated their domestic politics since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Russia, in turn, has been highly critical of the Baltic states' treatment of their Russian-speaking minorities. The draft of Putin's decree said that the rights of war veterans in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were "infringed in many areas of life" and that their efforts as "defenders of the motherland" had turned them into "occupiers," according to the RBC news site.

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