

Russia's Defense Ministry Says Cossacks Won't Hunt Down Draft Dodgers

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The Defense Ministry has denied media reports that Cossacks will help to hunt down Russian men trying to get out of performing their mandatory year of military service, state news agency TASS reported Friday.

Major General Igor Konashenkov, the official spokesman for the Defense Ministry, was cited by the news agency as saying that there are no such agreements between Moscow military commissioners and Cossacks, a quasi-militant group predominantly found in southern Russia and Ukraine.

"Such reports do not correspond at all with reality," Konashenkov was quoted as saying.

City-connected news agency M24 cited the head of a Cossack organization Wednesday as saying that about 1,400 Cossacks would take part in a mission to ensure that conscription-age Russian men do not evade their military duty.

Draft dodgers face fines of up to 200,000 rubles (\$3,200) and face up to two years in prison under Russian law.

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