

Russian Federation Council Approves New National Guard

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The upper house of the Russian parliament, the Federation Council, has approved the creation of a National Guard, the Interfax news agency reported [Wednesday](#).

Russian President Vladimir Putin created the new defense force by presidential decree in April 2016. The troops will be used to fight terrorism and organized crime, provide territorial defense, protect public order and secure government facilities.

The organization will also be in charge of gun control and securing borders to “ensure Russian territorial integrity,” Interfax reported.

The new National Guard will controversially be allowed to fire into crowds in a select number of situations, such as terrorist incidents, hostage situations, or if a government building secured by the National Guard comes under attack.

The soldiers will be forbidden in all circumstances from shooting at pregnant women,

children, or people with disabilities.

Troops can also use physical force against direct threats to members of the public or fellow soldiers.

Powers previously held by Interior Ministry troops, including riot control in cities and prisons, will also be transferred to the new force, giving them the power to open and search cars, check for identification documents and detain citizens.

The media will not be allowed to report on the location of National Guard soldiers, in order to “protect the safety of the troops and their families.”

A number of analysts have criticized the creation of the new force, claiming that their powers are too wide-ranging, that the soldiers will be difficult to hold to account, and that the move represents a further shift towards a police state.

The council's approval helps to ensure that the National Guard will be operational in time for State Duma elections in September this year. President Putin warned the Russian people in February that “the country’s enemies from abroad” may attempt to interfere with the vote.

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