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Russian Military Issues Secure Thumb Drives to Prevent Leaks — Reports

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

The Russian military has reportedly issued secure thumb drives for servicemen to store classified data in the wake of embarrassing revelations about Russian troop deployments in Ukraine and Syria and open-source investigations into its military intelligence.

Russia has taken steps this year to secure communications, including banning troops from using smartphones to avoid data leaks and drafting a bill to restrict information they share on social media.

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The Russian Defense Ministry started issuing personalized storage devices to troops with access to classified information earlier this year, the pro-Kremlin Izvestia newspaper reported Tuesday.

“It looks like a regular thumb drive, but it’s designed to prevent data leaks,” the publication cited the Defense Ministry as saying.

Only computers with special software and users with a password can access the data and the device’s every contact with a computer is tracked, Izvestia reports. Blue-colored thumb drives store data categorized “for internal use only,” while red thumb drives store top-secret information.

The loss of secret thumb drives or use of third-party storage devices can lead to a soldier’s dismissal or – in matters involving state secrets – up to seven years behind bars, Izvestia reports.

“Of course such technologies increase information security,” the outlet quoted Vladimir Rubanov, a former senior KGB analyst and ex-deputy chief of the Russian Security Council, as saying.

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