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High Suicide Rate Plagues Russian Military, Lawmaker Says

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The report comes amid renewed focus on the Russian military's hazing culture that has survived despite widespread reform efforts. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Suicides and fatal road accidents make up a high share of deaths in Russia's military despite declining overall figures, according to Defense Ministry data cited by lawmakers Tuesday.

Overall deaths in the Russian Armed Forces have decreased by 29% between 2015-2019, State Duma deputy Valery Rashkin told Interfax without providing figures for each cause of death.

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The Russian military is concerned about the high rate of suicides and traffic accident deaths, as well as deaths from safety rules violations, plane crashes and drownings, Rashkin said.

The Mother's Right nonprofit estimates that up to 44% of deaths among military conscripts

are suicides, while only 4% happen in the line of duty. Official data puts the number of Russian army personnel at 1.9 million, about 80% of whom are conscripts.

Rashkin said he obtained the data from Deputy Defense Minister Valery Gerasimov as part of an official request.

Gerasimov's report comes amid renewed focus on the Russian military's hazing culture that has survived despite widespread reforms introduced over a year ago. Last year, a Russian conscript blamed his shooting spree that killed eight fellow soldiers on hazing.

Around 12% of all crimes committed within the ranks in 2019 were related to hazing, Rashkin said, noting that these tend to be the most high-profile crimes.

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