The Moscow Times
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Putin Orders Increase in Russian Army Size to Over 2M

August 25, 2022



kremlin.ru

President Vladimir Putin ordered the expansion of the Russian military Thursday as Moscow struggles to fulfill its objectives in Ukraine six months after the invasion of its pro-Western neighbor.

As part of the changes, the total number of military and civilian staff in the Russian Armed Forces will increase from 1.9 million to nearly 2.04 million.

The increase will only come from adding new soldiers — not new civilian employees — meaning that the total number of soldiers will rise by 137,000 to 1.15 million.

The Russian military will be operating at this new level from the beginning of next year, according to the decree.

"I wonder if this will mean a larger draft. If that's what it means — and it's too early to say — it would be a major walk back for the last 15-20 years of personnel policy," tweeted Dara

Massicot, a senior researcher at the U.S.-based RAND think tank and a former senior analyst at the Pentagon.

“Expansion like this is a move you make when strategic forecasts for the future inside the General Staff are gloomy, or you have a longer term conflict or project in mind.”

U.S. officials estimate that Russia has lost 75,000 troops killed and injured during six months of fighting in Ukraine, and the Russian military is believed to be suffering from an acute manpower shortage.

Putin’s last order to increase the size of the military — in 2017 — boosted the number of soldiers to just over 1 million.

Some Russian generals believe that the war in Ukraine could last several more years, according to independent media reports.

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