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# ‘We Just Started Crying’: Call-Up Gains Steam as Russians Receive Draft Papers

By Leyla Latypova

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A military enlistment office in Moscow. **Moskva News Agency**

Thousands of men across Russia were handed draft papers and NGOs helping conscripts were flooded with requests for help Thursday amid the military mobilization launched by President Vladimir Putin to provide extra manpower for the Ukraine war.

One Muscovite who was detained with her husband at an anti-mobilization demonstration told The Moscow Times that male protesters were given draft papers at the police station.

“There was a military recruiting officer who gave the detained men draft notifications,” she told The Moscow Times.

“When the first person was asked to go to a separate room, we did not understand what was going on — but when he returned with a draft slip, we just started crying.”

While Putin said Russia would only implement a “partial” mobilization targeting reservists

with military experience in his televised announcement of the measure Wednesday, evidence from across the country as conscription got underway suggested some men were being drafted despite having spent no time in the Armed Forces.

Long lines of cars were reported at Russia's borders with neighboring states, including Finland, Georgia and Mongolia, as men apparently tried to flee the country, while prices for flights to countries accepting Russian travelers skyrocketed.

One father of five children with no military experience was contacted by the authorities in the Siberian city of Ulan-Ude on Thursday, his wife Yanina Nimaeva told The Moscow Times.

"The local authorities called my husband yesterday and asked him about his whereabouts. We were shocked and just switched off our phones," she said.

**Embed:**

> «Папа, пока! Возвращайся!»
>
> Жуткое видео из Старого Оскола (Белгородская область)
> pic.twitter.com/YYuHFKvY3K
>
> — Холод (@holodmedia) September 22, 2022

"On Thursday morning they visited our apartments where we are registered to check if he was there," she added. "We are trying to get in touch with human rights activists."

According to Russian law, draft papers must be handed to the recipient in person, who is then required to sign to confirm they have been received.

An unidentified man mobilized in the city of Chita near the Chinese border told state news agency RIA Novosti on Thursday that he was handed his draft summons at home.

"They told me to turn up [to the enlistment center] at about 10:00 with warm clothes," he said.

Dozens of videos appeared online apparently showing groups of men gathering near military enlistment offices, or boarding coaches and planes, in cities across Russia.

More than 10,000 reservists were conscripted in the first twenty-four hours of mobilization, rear admiral Vladimir Tsimlyansky told journalists late Thursday.

Additional recruitment offices reportedly opened their doors across Russia, from St. Petersburg to Russia's Far East.

Amid growing fears that almost any man aged between 18 and 60 could be at risk of mobilization, human rights groups offering help to soldiers, or potential conscripts, were

overwhelmed by inquiries.

“The panic is huge,” said Sergei Krivenko, the head of the Citizen. Army. Law. group that provides legal assistance to Russian soldiers.

“Previously, we had around 50 requests a day, but over the past two days we have received 14,000,” he told The Moscow Times.

**Embed:**

Alexandra Garmazhapova, the co-founder of the Free Buryatia Foundation, an anti-war organization supporting conscientious objectors from the Siberian republic of Buryatia, said that up to 5,000 men had likely already been mobilized there.

“This is not a limited mobilization; the situation in Buryatia is very much a full mobilization,” she told The Moscow Times, recounting an incident in which one man was woken at 4 a.m. by military officials.

“The number of requests [for help] didn’t just grow, it slammed us. Before there were…two or three messages every day… but now, in two days, each member of our team received thousands of messages,” she said.

Back in Moscow, protest monitoring group OVD-Info said that anti-war protesters were served with draft papers inside at least 15 police stations following Wednesday’s demonstrations against mobilization.

“There have been cases of psychological pressure,” said Eva Levenber, who works on legal issues for OVD-Info. “Oftentimes, the draft papers were issued by people in plain clothes without any identification marks,” she told The Moscow Times.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Thursday that the practice of issuing draft orders inside police stations was “not against the law.”

Russian journalist Artyom Krieger, who was detained while covering the protests in Moscow, said he received draft papers stating he must attend a recruitment office.

“There were around a dozen men at the police station who also received these documents,” he told The Moscow Times from inside of a police van ahead of a court hearing Thursday.

“I’m a student and I have a military exemption. I just hope everything will be fine.”

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