

Anti-Draft Protesters Block Highway in Russia's Dagestan

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Russians protesting President Vladimir Putin's "partial" call-up of reservists to fight in Ukraine blocked traffic on a highway in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, reports said Thursday.

The demonstration in the village of Babayurt is the latest example of anger over Putin's orders to mobilize hundreds of thousands of new troops in his faltering attempts to seize and control Ukrainian territory.

A video snippet posted on Dagestani activist Ruslan Akhalchi's Telegram messaging app channel [showed](#) a small crowd standing on a four-lane roadway with trucks idling on each side.

"The highway is closed," a voice behind the camera was heard saying in a [longer version](#) of the video circulating online.

Residents blocked the federal highway after heated arguments outside Babayurt's military recruitment office, Dagestan's Chernovik weekly [reported](#), citing the villagers. Video of the altercation showed men arguing over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with one saying "I don't want to go" and another dismissing the war as "politics."

Chernovik later said that law enforcement officers cleared the highway of protesters. There were no reports of detentions.

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Anti-draft demonstrations were also reported in other North Caucasus republics of Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya, with some Chechen activists being detained and forced to apologize on camera. Military recruitment offices in at least five Russian cities were attacked with Molotov cocktails, according to reports.

Despite the protests, local media [reported](#) that busloads of newly mobilized recruits from Russia's southern and North Caucasus regions had been sent to military bases.

Hours after Putin's announcement Wednesday, Dagestan's authorities signed mobilization orders [banning](#) reservists from leaving the region. Several other Russian territories have issued [similar travel bans](#).

Dagestan has the highest officially reported number of [troop deaths](#) among all Russian regions in the nearly seven-month invasion of Ukraine.

Russians took to the streets across dozens of cities Wednesday to protest Putin's mobilization decree, with independent monitors reporting close to 1,400 detentions. Authorities in Moscow and other cities were said to have handed draft papers to some detainees inside police stations.

Putin's announcement also appears to have sparked a mass exodus of fighting-age men, with reports of [traffic surging](#) on Russia's side of its international borders, flights to visa-free countries for Russian nationals almost entirely booked and prices skyrocketing.

Activists have called for more nationwide anti-draft rallies this weekend.

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