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Russian Regions Walk Back Ad Hoc Mobilization After Putin Scolding

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A military enlistment center in Makhachkala, capital of the republic of Dagestan. **Stringer / TASS**

Several regional heads in southern Russia have reported taking measures to improve their regions' draft efforts after President Vladimir Putin reprimanded officials for "mistakes" in carrying out his partial mobilization orders.

In Russia's republic of Dagestan, the regional governor cursed out military recruitment officers who were filmed driving the streets with loudspeakers and ordering men to report to enlistment centers.

"What kinds of idiots are these?" said Governor Sergei Melikov, according to a video shared by pro-Kremlin social media channels. "Are you morons?"

The North Caucasus region became a flashpoint of anti-draft protests after Putin ordered what he called a "partial" mobilization to replenish the dwindling ranks in Ukraine. Dagestani authorities opened at least 30 criminal and 100 misdemeanor cases into the demonstrations.

Melikov apologized to residents earlier and, in the video of his expletive-laden criticism of excesses, threatened recruitment officers with criminal cases into “fake news.”

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And at least two governors said they have allowed wrongfully mobilized men to return home.

Rostov region Governor Vasily Golubev said Thursday afternoon that an unspecified number of men who were called up to fight despite having health problems had been sent home.

“These decisions have been reached in a number of high-profile cases,” Golubev said on his Telegram social media channel.

Belgorod region Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said later that 183 men had been or were in the process of being returned.

“Where the information [on wrongful recruitment] is confirmed, we take quick action,” Gladkov wrote.

Putin acknowledged "mistakes" late Thursday with the chaotic mobilization process, saying those who have been swept up despite deferrals or exemptions must be sent home.

Cases have been reported of officers in far-flung regions switching on a fire alarm to coax residents out of their apartments, using public transportation to deliver new recruits, as well as tricking people into picking up documents from public service buildings to serve them draft papers.

A number of business sector representatives ranging from pharmacists, bankers and pilots have appealed for deferments from authorities.

Russia’s Defense Ministry last week vowed that IT, telecom, “systemically important” media and financial sector employees would be exempt from the drive to mobilize at least 300,000 troops.

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