

Frozen Fish and Limitless Cabbage: How Russia is Motivating Draftees

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Russian recruits escorted by their wives at a railway station in Prudboi, in the Volgograd region. **AP / TASS**

When even money and patriotism are insufficient to inspire Russians to sign up to fight in Ukraine, it's time to bring out the big guns such as food staples.

At least three Russian regions are promising to reward the families of new recruits with livestock, fish and vegetables since President Vladimir Putin ordered the mobilization of reservists two weeks ago.

The most generous offer to date comes from the Siberian republic of Tuva, which began a blitz of [payoffs](#) to every new soldier's family last week. The rewards being handed out to the relatives of those enlisting include one live sheep, 50 kilograms of flour, two bags of potatoes and cabbage "in the required amount."

Tuva is Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu's birthplace and one of the country's poorest regions. Independent investigative outlets have drawn a strong correlation between poverty

rates and the proportion of mobilized recruits being provided by each region of the country.

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The giveaways continued this week, with authorities in the Far East's Sakhalin region [promising](#) 5 kilograms of frozen fish to the families of mobilized recruits.

In the Kurgan region in the Urals, authorities on Friday [promised](#) a kilogram of *salo* (salted pork fat) to recruits who present their draft papers at local meat markets.

Among the first to offer incentives for new recruits was the city of Obninsk, near Moscow, whose mayor [promised](#) free school lunches to the children of draftees early last week.

Shoigu announced this week that around 200,000 reservists have been mobilized so far, with an estimated 100,000 more in the process of being called up.

Independent media, citing unnamed government sources, have claimed that as many as 1 million Russian reservists could be called up in what the authorities insist is just a "partial" mobilization of Russia's reserve forces.

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