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BBC Investigation Verifies Deaths of 10,000 Russian Troops in Ukraine

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Vladimir Smirnov / TASS

The Russian military has sustained over 10,000 verifiable deaths in the course of its nine-month invasion of Ukraine, according to open-source research conducted by the BBC and independent Russian news outlet Mediazona that was released on Friday.

Among the 10,002 dead servicemen identified in the investigation are scores of elite servicemen belonging to Russian airborne units, over a hundred combat pilots, and 430 recruits drafted by the Kremlin in an October push to bolster troop numbers in Ukraine.

The true death toll in the conflict is expected to be far greater than that established in the research, the BBC said.

An estimated 15% of Russia's dead in the conflict are officers, including four generals and 49 colonels, the investigation found. The unusually high figure is believed to have been caused by breakdowns in communication between the Russian ranks, which forced commanding officers closer to the frontlines.

Russia’s rank-and-file servicemen suffered the greatest losses overall, however, with infantry units consisting of lesser-trained and inexperienced recruits making up 17% of the total death toll.

The Moscow Times reported in July that some newly recruited troops were being sent to the frontlines with just days of training, a fact that no doubt contributed to a death toll that already far outweighs the losses sustained by the Russian military in far-longer conflicts in Afghanistan and Chechnya.

In addition, some of Russia's poorest regions have contributed a disproportionately high number of recruits to the war in Ukraine. While soldiers from the Moscow region account for just 54 verifiable deaths in the war so far, the figure for the Siberian republic of Buryatia, which has just one-seventh of the population of the Moscow region, is over six times as high at 356.

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