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Russian Army Forms 'Artistic Units' in Modern-Day First

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Mobilized reservists of the Russian Army attend a concert. **Donat Sorokin / TASS**

The Russian military has formed what it called its first "artistic" units of musicians, actors and other creatives to boost troop morale amid a series of battlefield losses in Ukraine.

"Two permanent frontline creative brigades were formed for the first time in the modern history of the Russian Armed Forces," the Defense Ministry said in a statement cited by the RBC news website.

The "creative brigades" will consist of professional artists who have either volunteered for military service or been drafted as part of the Kremlin's mobilization of reservists this fall.

They include opera singers, vocal performers, musicians, actors and circus artists, according to RBC.

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The Defense Ministry said the new units aim to "maintain a high moral, political and psychological state [among] the participants of the special military operation."

Russia refers to its nearly 10-month invasion of Ukraine as a "special military operation" and those who publicly use the term "war" are prosecuted under wartime censorship laws.

The creative brigades will be tasked with providing "cultural and artistic services for fighters in the special operation zone" and collecting army "folklore."

The head of the first brigade to be deployed said in the statement that the new units were styled after the 2,000 artists who formed the cultural backbone of the Soviet army during World War II.

The ministry's announcement comes days after it organized the collection and transfer of donated musical instruments to troops on the frontline.

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