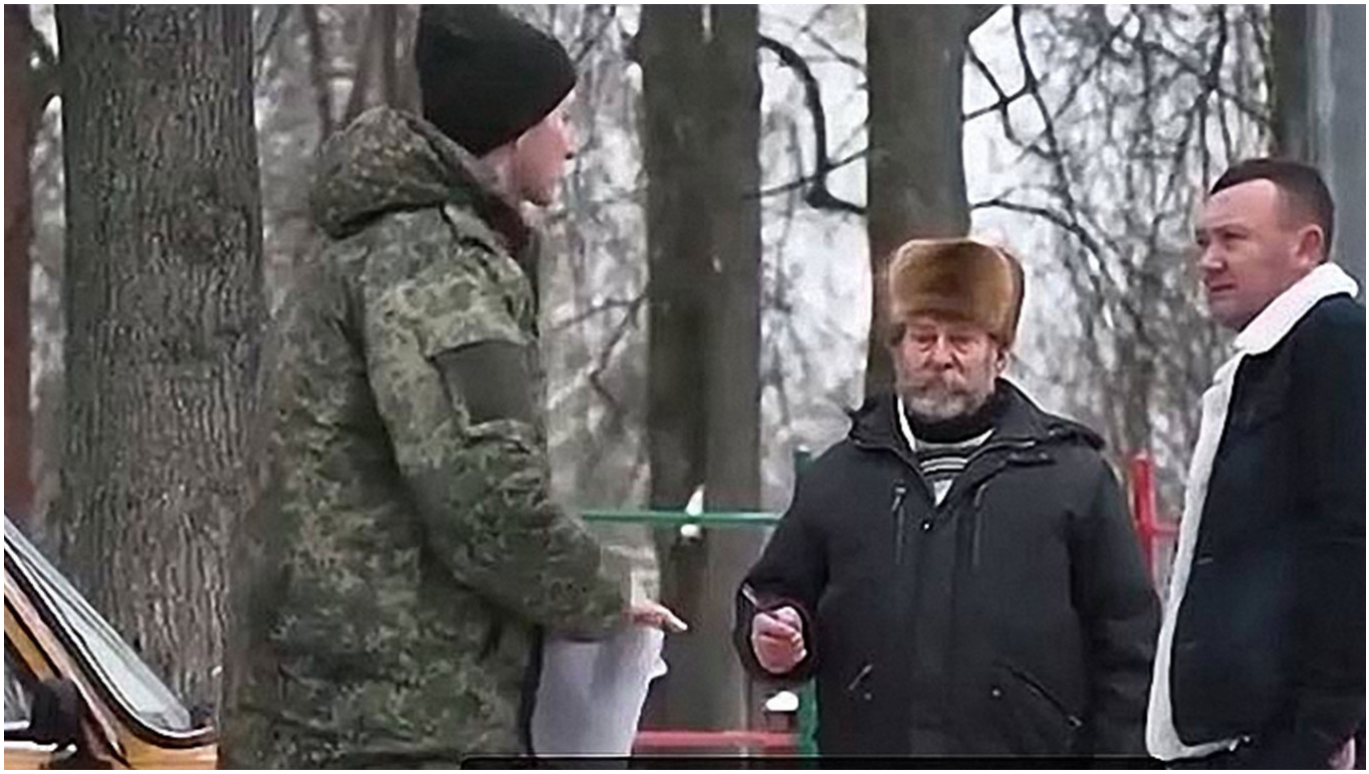
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Russian War Backers Split Over Military Recruitment Ads

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Still from video

A series of anonymously produced Russian military recruitment ads has stirred heated debate among pro-war bloggers over what truly motivates men to fight Ukraine.

The sleek productions, which first appeared online last week, portray poverty-stricken Russians whose fortunes turn for the better after they join the Russian Armed Forces.

Some of the widely shared videos depict a father buying his daughter a new phone, a day laborer driving a new Ford, and a grandson saving his grandfather from having to sell his beloved Soviet car — all after they sign up for military service. In another ad, a married woman is seen offering her ex to get back together and build a family once she sees him in uniform.

Embed:

“Become a volunteer! Change your life!” reads the caption to the ads that offer potential recruits above-average pay, debt relief, social status and other primarily financial incentives.

Pro-war Russian-language bloggers criticized the ads, claiming that their emphasis on financial incentives for joining the Russian army betrayed what they see as more noble ideological goals.

The secrecy surrounding the ads’ origins fueled speculation among pro-war bloggers, which was immediately dismissed, that the campaign had been ordered by the Ukrainian military.

“Such a big spit on our people can only be considered a crime,” state television reporter Andrei Medvedev wrote on his Telegram messaging app channel Tuesday in response to the message conveyed to viewers.

But other pro-war public figures have openly acknowledged the Russian soldiers’ financial rather than principled motivations on state-controlled television.

Investigative journalists cited actors from the ads as saying that they were paid 8,000 rubles ($113) but kept in the dark about the campaign’s purpose.

iStories, an investigative news website, said the ads first appeared on a little-known page in Russia’s most popular social network VKontakte. The page and the videos were deleted after they went viral.

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