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Moscow Students Targeted in Russia's Spring Military Call-Up

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A man cycles past the Russian Defense Ministry headquarters in Moscow. **Alexander Nemenov / AFP**

The Russian military's spring call-up has targeted Moscow students in an apparent attempt to meet President Vladimir Putin's target of enlisting 147,000 young men for compulsory service, the Meduza news website reported Tuesday, citing activists.

The speculation follows reporting last week that authorities had started violently delivering students to enlistment offices. Students in at least three schools, including Moscow State University (MSU), reported receiving enlistment notices in their dorms.

An activist from the Conscientious Objectors' Movement, which helps young Russians legally avoid the draft, told Meduza that these raids came as a surprise because they typically don't begin until May.

She said the early raids mean the Russian military may be seeking to quickly recruit 147,000 conscripts for the spring call-up before turning its focus to a potential renewed mobilization drive.

“Dealing with streams of mobilized soldiers and conscripts simultaneously is beyond their strength,” the activist, whom Meduza identified by the pseudonym Larisa, was quoted as saying.

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She said Moscow leads other Russian cities in the number of raids on students due to its high number of universities and dorms where it would be impossible to avoid enlistment officers.

The Russian capital’s vast surveillance network has also been deployed to help recruitment officers find draft dodgers.

Russia’s spring draft kicked off at the start of the month and is scheduled to wrap up on July 15.

University students are typically exempt from conscription in the biannual draft, which takes place every year even in peacetime.

With Russia’s invasion of Ukraine facing continued setbacks, Putin late last year authorized Defense Minister Shoigu to boost Russia’s combat personnel from 1.15 million to 1.5 million.

Russia this month passed legislation creating an online database of conscripts and imposing travel bans and other crippling restrictions on hopeful draft-dodgers.

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