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Calls in State Duma to Increase Length of Russian Military Service

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Aleksandr Avilov / Moskva Agency

In an attempt to improve the professionalism of the Russian military, the first deputy chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee has said that Russia must increase the length of its military service.

"I have long been in favor of increasing the period of military service. The longer soldiers and sailors spend in the army, the more experienced they are, and the unit is more coordinated, something our troops often lack now," Alexei Zhuravlev told the Russian news agency Ura.ru.

Zhuravlev also said that servicemen should not enter the army for the various material benefits and perks soldiers receive, but to earn the "respect and honor" of the population.

Recalling how any serviceman or officer was once considered "the elite of society," Zhuravlev argued that it was "finally time to return this attitude to people in uniform."

Zhuravlev himself is not believed to have served in either the Soviet or the Russian army.

In late April, Nikolai Volkov, a deputy of the State Council of Crimea, made a similar proposal. "One year is not enough. There should be at least two years and three in the Navy. It is a question of safety and professional training ... a Russian man has traditionally always been a soldier, and a soldier he must remain," he said.

According to Volkov, after signing a contract a serviceman should be immediately provided with a two-bedroom apartment. And conscripts should be given vouchers for free higher education "in the most prestigious universities" after demobilization.

The Defense Ministry has said that it has no plans to change the current arrangement, however. The term of obligatory military service in Russia was reduced from two years to one year in 2008.

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