

Russia Recruits Women for Territorial Defense Units on Ukraine Border

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Belgorod territorial self-defense member Natalia Kolesnikova. vk.com/takt.med36

Authorities in Russia's southwestern Belgorod region are [recruiting](#) female fighters for defense units along the border with Ukraine.

State television broadcast reports this week featuring an all-female unit undergoing military training in the western part of the region, which has been targeted by armed incursions in recent months.

Channel One and Rossia showed footage of kindergarten teachers and librarians practicing rifle shooting and administering first aid to soldiers.

"Who are we fighting? Scum, if I may say so," said a female fighter named Anastasia.

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On Wednesday, a member of Belgorod's territorial defense Natalia Kolesnikova [posted](#) an

online recruitment ad targeting women.

“I can [...] show girls by example that women have a place here too,” Kolesnikova, a local hairdresser, [told](#) the independent news outlet Vyorstka.

“But you have to understand that you’ll have to run, jump, and so on. Everyone decides for themselves whether they can do it or not,” she said.

Kolesnikova has since deleted the recruitment ad without explanation.

In December, Belgorod region Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov announced the [formation](#) of territorial self-defense units.

The units consist of several battalions of local volunteers, many of whom had not been able to join Russia’s regular army due to health reasons or age limits.

Since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine, the Belgorod region has been regularly shelled, with civilian and military sites targeted in attacks.

Ukraine has denied responsibility for the cross-border strikes.

Gladkov announced plans in early July to [arm](#) the defense units, which he said would double in size from 3,000 to 6,000 fighters.

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