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Russian State Pipeline Firm Recruited Employees for Ukraine War – IStories

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BARS-20 battalion fighters. **VK**

Russia's oil pipeline monopoly Transneft sent hundreds of its employees to fight in Ukraine last summer as the Kremlin struggled to recruit soldiers for its war, according to an investigation by the independent news website IStories.

Journalists said that, in the months before President Vladimir Putin announced a "partial" mobilization in September 2022, Transneft was sending and equipping its employees from across Russia's regions to join a volunteer military battalion called BARS-20.

Among them was Alexei Saispaev, a Transneft security guard from the Tomsk region who joined the volunteer battalion after the company "announced that they were looking for people," one of his relatives told the outlet. Saispaev later died in Ukraine.

Since launching its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has come to rely on a patchwork of volunteer battalions, private mercenary groups and drafted reservists to prosecute its war as its conventional army's numbers have been depleted.

Transneft's volunteer enlistment drive appears to have taken place in several of Russia's regions and was aimed at recruiting workers mostly in their 40s and 50s.

“In general, a certain number of people had to be recruited,” an unnamed Transneft employee told IStories when asked whether the company had a quota for sending its workers to fight in the war against Ukraine.

Another anonymous source close to Transneft told the outlet that last year's volunteer recruitment drive was not the first in the company's history, saying that it had allegedly formed military detachments during the Second Chechen War.

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