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Far East Region Struggles to Meet Kremlin's Military Recruitment Quotas, Leaked Video Shows

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Sergei Karpukhin / TASS

Officials in Russia's Far Eastern republic of Sakha (Yakutia) have failed to meet quotas on recruitment of military volunteers for the war in Ukraine set by the Kremlin, according to leaked recordings of closed-door government meetings published by the Free Yakutia Foundation anti-war movement.

Sakha's military recruitment head Alexander Avdonin said the republic recruited the lowest number of volunteers of all regions in Russia's Far Eastern Military District after some of its *uluses* (districts) severely underperformed.

In the region's Aldanskiy district, Avdonin said, officials managed to recruit only 36 men by September despite being expected to send 176 soldiers to the frontlines by the end of this year. Only 34 of 143 spots were filled in the Lenskiy district.

“The Defense Ministry and Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev — who monitors this all the time, daily — are already asking questions,” Avdonin said in a video recorded in September.

Medvedev, the former Russian president who now serves as deputy head of Russia’s Security Council, now oversees the recruitment of volunteers for the Russian military.

“We have the lowest percentage [of recruits]...so there will be some repercussions,” Avdonin added, while calling on *ulus* heads to develop individual recruitment plans and accelerate their efforts.

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In another video published by Free Yakutia, Avdonin said Sakha will only be able to fulfill the yearly recruitment plan drawn up by the Kremlin by 80%, meaning the remainder will be added to the republic’s 2024 quota.

“No one will take this task away from us, we have to work, we have to send people [to the war] because it is not over,” Avdonin can be seen saying in the video.

“It might look like they are saying that the counterattacks have stopped [and] it might seem that things have become easier there at the frontlines. [But] it’s not any easier. Boys are dying in the trenches every day,” Avdonin added.

Russian officials have repeatedly assured the public that the Kremlin has no plans to mobilize reserves to aid its invasion of neighboring Ukraine. Instead, the government has been banking on enlistment of military volunteers.

At least 332 residents of Sakha — a republic with a total population of 997,000 — have been killed in Ukraine since the start of the war in February 2022, according to a tally by the independent Mediazona news website and the BBC’s Russian service.

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