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Putin Orders $4.6K Sign-On Bonus for New Army Recruits

July 31, 2024



Peter Kovalev / TASS

President Vladimir Putin ordered a signing-on bonus of 400,000 rubles ($4,600) for new recruits to fight in Ukraine, the latest sign of a scramble to boost Russian troop numbers amid growing battlefield losses.

A presidential decree published Wednesday promises the federally issued lump sum to anyone who signs a military contract for a minimum of one year from Aug. 1 until the end of 2024. That new sign-on bonus is more than double the one-time payment of 195,000 rubles initially promised to recruits in September 2022.

The decree also "recommends" that regional governors offer an additional 400,000 rubles to residents in their regions who join the military.

Increased payments are meant to "provide additional measures of social support" for soldiers and their families, according to the document, coming at a time when regions throughout the country have already raised financial incentives for new recruits.

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The minimum monthly salary for contract soldiers in Russia currently stands at 210,000 rubles ($2,407) — far exceeding the average income of 73,000 rubles ($837) per month. These lucrative payments can be especially appealing to working-class men in economically distressed communities.

Regional governments also offer various bonuses and other incentives to army recruits, such as free childcare and travel for soldiers' families. Experts say rising military payments and additional benefits reflect Russia's manpower crisis as the public loses interest in the war, now in its third year.

Although Russia conscripted some 300,000 reservists in September 2022, the Kremlin has sought to avoid a full-scale mobilization campaign given the unpopularity of such a move.

Russia's military keeps its casualty numbers in Ukraine a tight secret. But according to independent investigations, around 120,000 Russian soldiers are estimated to have been killed since the full-scale invasion.

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