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Russia Spending $22M Per Day on Military Recruitment – Analysis

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Vasiliy Kuzmichyonok / Moskva News Agency

Russia's mass military recruitment efforts are becoming increasingly costly as the war in Ukraine drags on for a fourth year, with the state shelling out some 2 billion rubles ($22 million) per day on sign-on bonuses for new recruits alone.

The figures, based on official data from the Finance Ministry and regional budgets, were compiled by Janis Kluge, a senior associate at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in Berlin.

According to Kluge's analysis, approximately three-quarters of the sign-on bonuses to military recruits — around 1.5 billion rubles ($18.3 million) per day — are shouldered by regional governments, many of which are now allocating nearly 3% of their annual budgets to the recruitment campaign. The remaining 500 million rubles ($6.1 million) come from the federal budget.

Despite a slowdown in increases of sign-on bonuses across the country, recruitment levels

remain consistent with late 2024, with an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 new soldiers joining the Russian military each day.

The average one-time bonus offered to recruits across 37 Russian regions currently stands at about 1.4 million rubles (around $15,500).

Compared to the same period a year ago, the number of new contract soldiers has nearly doubled, according to Kluge — a surge that appears sufficient to replace estimated daily frontline losses, as NATO officials currently assess Russian casualties at roughly 1,000 troops per day.

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Meanwhile, spending on recruitment infrastructure has ballooned fivefold since April 2024.

If these trends continue, the total cost to the Russian state could reach 730 billion rubles ($8.9 billion) by year's end — more than double the federal government's annual spending on its national healthcare initiative and nearly half of the country's entire higher education budget.

While the Defense Ministry enlisted roughly 440,000 contract soldiers in 2024, or an average of 1,200 per day, experts warn that it will be increasingly difficult to sustain this pace.

George Barros, the head of the Russia team at the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War, estimates that Moscow may only be able to maintain current levels of warfare for another 12 to 16 months.

"The system for generating fighters worked for 2.5 years but it's starting to fail," Barros told The New York Post. "Russia is constrained by the laws of economics, scarce resources, and there isn't an endless manpower resource in Russia."

Compounding the challenge is the shrinking National Wealth Fund, one of the Kremlin's key financial backstops. Since the war began in 2022, the fund's liquid assets have fallen by two-thirds — a $106 billion drop. The fund's remaining reserves now stand at just $40 billion, the lowest since its inception in 2008.

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