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Russians' Grassroots Fundraising for Ukraine War Collapses – Vyorstka

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Grassroots fundraising for the Russian military slowed significantly during the third year of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, according to an analysis by the exiled news outlet Vyorstka.

In the early days of the invasion, support for the war effort surged across the country as reports of undersupplied and underequipped soldiers being sent to the front made national headlines. Over three years later, that momentum is fading even as the supply problems largely persist.

Vyorstka reviewed activity across 75 pro-war Telegram channels and volunteer groups and found that while the number of fundraising posts fell only slightly in 2024 compared to 2023, donations slowed to 11.8 billion rubles (roughly $150 million) in 2024, down from 39.1 billion rubles ($500 million) the previous year.

What once took hours to fund in the first two years of the war now takes weeks, according to Vyorstka. Fundraisers have turned to increasingly emotional — and sometimes guilt-laden —

appeals to try to maintain engagement.

“A cup of coffee might seem like nothing, but 100 of them buys an evacuation *bukhanka* [army van] that can save 50-100 of our wounded,” read one recent post from the pro-war Telegram channel Troika.

Another pro-war channel, Dva Maiori (Two Majors), urged “every third” reader to send 41 rubles for thermal imagers for large-caliber machine guns used by the Russian Navy in the Black Sea.

Other channels launched campaigns calling for 100-ruble donations, telling followers that “if you have enough for daily public transit in Moscow, then you have enough for the army.”

In June 2025, several pro-war channels simultaneously posted a message that fundraising was drying up, as Russians interpreted ongoing peace talks as a sign that the fighting would soon come to an end.

“Many people feel like the war is over, or that it never really began,” the message said. It warned that complacency was dangerous, insisting that “the outcome of the special military operation will determine the future of every Russian.”

One anonymous serviceman told Vyorstka that many people posing as volunteer fundraisers appeared to be running businesses under the guise of humanitarian work.

Most donations are collected through personal bank cards, with few detailed reports about where the money goes. Fundraisers often share how much they raised and post photos from the front, but rarely provide receipts or itemized reports. Some use cryptocurrency wallets.

Even registered nonprofit groups, which once published financial statements, have largely stopped doing so or now file zero-activity reports, Vyorstka said.

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