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Russian Lawmakers Pass Bill Allowing Stateless People to Join Military

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Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency

Russian lawmakers on Tuesday passed a bill allowing stateless individuals to sign military contracts, part of ongoing efforts to bolster troop numbers for the war in Ukraine.

Members of the lower-house State Duma approved the bill, which was introduced by the Justice Ministry in April, in its second and third readings. It amends existing laws on military service, defense and related issues.

The legislation allows military recruiters to treat stateless persons the same as foreign nationals seeking to enlist. Those who complete military service will be eligible to apply for Russian citizenship through a simplified process.

The bill now moves to the upper-house Federation Council for a single vote before it is expected to be signed into law by President Vladimir Putin. It will take effect the day it is signed.

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Lawmakers have said they hope to attract up to 5,000 stateless army recruits after the bill is signed into law.

According to Federal Security Service (FSB) data, nearly 90,000 stateless people entered Russia in 2024 alone, though the figures may include repeat entries by the same individuals.

Russia's Interior Ministry, which does not distinguish between foreigners and stateless people in its reports, recorded 5.93 million such individuals registering for work in 2024. Fewer than 1% have obtained work permits.

Last year, Putin eased citizenship rules for foreigners serving in the Russian military, but the policy has not led to a significant rise in enlistment, migration expert Vadim Kozhenkov told the business newspaper Vedomosti in April.

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