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Russian Defense Salaries Fall in First Since Ukraine Invasion

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Wages at Russian defense enterprises fell last month for the first time since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine even as average salaries nationwide continued to rise, according to a study by the exiled news website Novaya Gazeta Europe.

Reviewing nearly 600,000 job postings from 1,200 military enterprises on job platform hh.ru, Novaya Gazeta Europe found that advertised salaries in the defense sector were down 10% in in August 2025 compared to the same month of 2024.

The sharpest wage growth came in the first year of the war, when a surge in state orders created a labor shortage and pushed up pay.

But by 2025, Deputy Industry Minister Vasily Osmakov said the economy had reached "a turning point," with factories unable to expand output simply by adding workers and overtime.

Novaya Gazeta Europe also found that defense hiring peaked in August 2022, when the sector accounted for almost 2% of all vacancies.

By summer 2025, defense firms posted just 34,500 jobs in three months, compared with 52,000 in the same period a year earlier. Even in the pre-invasion month of January 2022, hiring was higher than current levels.

The slowdown undercuts warnings made by the lower-house State Duma in late 2024 of a looming shortfall of 400,000 defense workers. By mid-2025, most factories had instead reached their capacity limits.

Drone and missile producers were an exception to the trend. Revenues at drone manufacturers rose 2.5 times since 2022, according to Novaya Gazeta Europe and the U.S.-based Institute for the Study of War, with wages still climbing.

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