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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Orders Highest Fall Conscription Target in 9 Years

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Conscripts at the military enlistment office in Moscow. **Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency**

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday ordered the conscription of 135,000 men by the end of 2025, the largest conscription drive in nine years.

During the autumn 2016 intake, Putin ordered the conscription of 152,000 men. In the three years since Russia began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it has drafted an average of 127,000 men every fall.

Russia's spring 2025 draft called up 160,000 men, the highest since autumn 2011.

Russia holds biannual conscription drives, with men aged 18-30 eligible for one year of mandatory service.

Typically, more men are called up in the spring, when most people graduate from school or college.

Officially, recruits are expected to serve at a military base inside Russia.

The Kremlin and Defense Ministry insist conscripts are not sent into combat and that the draft is unrelated to the war in Ukraine. However, Ukraine has repeatedly claimed to have captured Russian conscripts, and Putin previously admitted that some were mistakenly deployed early in the 2022 invasion.

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Beyond regular conscription, Russia has recruited hundreds of thousands of contract soldiers for its war in Ukraine, offering high salaries and large sign-up bonuses.

Putin has ordered Russia's military to expand to 1.5 million active personnel by 2026.

Last week, Russia's lower-house State Duma passed a bill in the first of three readings that would move toward a year-round conscription model starting next year.

AFP contributed reporting.

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