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Saratov Region Cuts Military Contract Bonus

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A contract service enlistment office. **Erik Romanenko / TASS**

Southern Russia's Saratov region has become the latest federal subject to reduce enlistment bonuses for soldiers signing military contracts, with one of its most populous districts slashing payments even further, media reported Wednesday.

Last week, Orenburg and Saratov became the fifth and sixth regions to reduce military contract bonuses from at least 2 million rubles to the minimum legal threshold of 400,000 rubles ($5,000).

The figure matches the minimum level that President Vladimir Putin recommended that regional governments pay new recruits last year. The federal government typically provides a matching payment.

Other regions like Belgorod, Samara, the Yamalo-Nenets autonomous district and the republic of Bashkortostan lowered army contract payments to at least 1 million rubles earlier in the year.

The news outlet 7x7 found a decree issued by the Saratov region's Engels district last week cutting municipal bonuses from 400,000 rubles to 150,000 rubles ($1,850) for soldiers who sign contracts between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31.

The municipal payments are separate from regional payments, but they are sometimes designed to complement or add to what soldiers are already receiving from the regional or federal governments.

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While authorities had widely promoted the payment hikes through regional media campaigns, the latest reductions have gone largely unannounced, surfacing only after the decrees were published on official government websites.

Activists who help Russian men avoid military service previously told 7x7 they believe the cuts are tied to new policies allowing those held in pretrial detention to sign military contracts.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, regional governments have offered large enlistment bonuses to attract volunteers amid growing battlefield losses. Several regions have rolled back these benefits as regional budgets have come under strain.

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