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Regions Reintroduce Huge Sign-On Bonuses for Contract Soldiers After Lowering Payments in 2025

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A military recruitment advertisement in the republic of Tatarstan. **Andrey Titov / Business Online / TASS**

Authorities in at least five Russian regions have sharply raised sign-on bonuses for contract soldiers after cutting them to the federal minimum late last year, the exiled news outlet 7x7 reported Wednesday.

Since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia has relied heavily on contract recruitment, offering high monthly salaries and large one-time bonuses to attract volunteers. The federal minimum sign-on bonus is 400,000 rubles ($4,500), though many regions have offered far higher payments.

In October, the republics of Tatarstan, Chuvashia and Mari El, along with the Samara and Orenburg regions, reduced their bonuses to the federal minimum as regional budgets came under strain from rising war-related spending.

However, this month, those same five regions have again raised bonuses for contract soldiers, in some cases to several times the federal minimum.

Chuvashia, for example, restored its one-time payment to 2.1 million rubles ($26,800), which, combined with a federal bonus of 400,000 rubles, brings the total payment to 2.5 million rubles. Tatarstan raised its bonus to 2.5 million rubles.

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In the Samara and Orenburg regions, payments were increased to 1.1 million rubles and 1 million rubles, respectively. In Mari El, one of Russia's poorest regions, the bonus was raised to 2.1 million rubles.

Regional authorities did not explain why they reversed last year's cuts, instead framing the increases in patriotic terms and emphasizing state support for servicemen.

In the absence of an official explanation, authorities might be seeking to keep contract service financially attractive amid ongoing manpower demands, as hopes that the Ukraine war might soon end through U.S.-brokered talks have faded.

President Vladimir Putin ordered the military to boost active personnel to 1.5 million by 2026. Officials said Russia recruited 417,000 contract soldiers in 2025.

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