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Putin Calls for Ukraine War Veterans to Fill Russia's Police Staffing Shortages

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President Vladimir Putin has urged Russia's Interior Ministry to recruit veterans of the country's war in Ukraine to help address growing personnel shortages in the country's police force.

Speaking at the ministry's annual review on Wednesday, Putin said veterans' combat experience, psychological resilience and physical conditioning made them well-suited to strengthen the ranks of the police.

"I ask that you actively recruit such candidates for existing vacancies," he said.

Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev said the ministry faced a shortfall of 212,000 officers in 2025.

High staff turnover has exacerbated the problem, with 80,000 officers departing last year compared to 58,000 new hires.

Some 350,000 personnel have departed since 2020, leaving certain local police departments effectively understaffed.

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Kolokoltsev previously cited low salaries and heavy workloads as the main causes of the shortage.

Putin responded that the government had adopted "a range of measures" to improve pay and social benefits for officers, with implementation planned for 2026.

The staffing gap is most acute in patrol services, criminal investigations, local precincts, investigative units and inquiry divisions, Kolokoltsev said.

Last week, the Interior Ministry published a draft order expanding which personnel can serve in police positions.

Under the plan, police authority could be granted to students at ministry-affiliated educational institutions, interns, staff in human resources and training departments, investigators, forensic experts and other specialists.

Russian officials have previously highlighted the challenge of reintegrating veterans into civilian life, citing concerns over unemployment, mental health and social adjustment for those returning from Ukraine.

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