The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Signs Law Forgiving Up to $140K in Debt for New Military Recruits

May 26, 2026



A mobile Sberbank location at a military recruitment center in Moscow. **Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency**

President Vladimir Putin signed a law on Monday forgiving up to 10 million rubles ($140,000) in unpaid debt for new military recruits and their spouses, marking the latest state financial incentive aimed at luring more men to fight in the war against Ukraine.

The law applies to any Russian who signs a minimum one-year contract with the military to serve in Ukraine after May 1, 2026. The debt exemption also extends to the spouses of recruits.

Russia's parliament had passed the debt forgiveness bill earlier this month before it was sent to Putin's desk.

The measure is the latest in a growing list of economic incentives the government has introduced over the last four years to boost troop numbers without resorting to a politically risky mandatory mobilization.

In September 2022, Putin ordered a “partial” mobilization of some 300,000 reservists following a successful Ukrainian counteroffensive. Thousands of Russian men fled the country as a result, and protests broke out in some parts of the country, including in the republic of Dagestan.

Russia has gradually increased sign-on bonuses for army recruits and offered high baseline salaries to sustain its war effort.

The federal minimum sign-on bonus is 400,000 rubles ($4,500), though many regions have offered far higher payments.

In 2024, 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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https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/05/26/putin-signs-law-forgiving-up-to-140k-in-debt-for-new-military-recruits-a92846