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Siberia's Irkutsk Region Offers Military Recruiters Record $18K Commission for Enlisting Foreigners

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Men standing in line at a military recruitment office. **Arthur Novosiltsev / Moskva News Agency**

Siberia's Irkutsk region has introduced a record-high commission for military recruiters who successfully enlist foreign nationals and stateless persons into the Russian military, according to a directive signed by the regional governor on Thursday.

Under the directive, recruiters will now receive 1.5 million rubles ($17,800) for every foreign citizen they sign to a military contract. The new commission represents a fourfold increase over the past seven months, making Irkutsk the highest-paying Russian region for foreign enlistment incentives, according to the exiled news outlet Vyorstka.

Irkutsk previously offered a flat recruiter fee of 400,000 rubles ($4,700) per contract, regardless of the recruit's citizenship. Vyorstka said the latest directive explicitly separates foreign citizens and stateless individuals from Russian recruits, while doubling the commission for enlisting Russians from other regions to 800,000 rubles ($9,500).

The move reflects a broader trend as regional governments scramble to meet military recruitment quotas. The Smolensk region recently raised recruiter payouts from 115,000 rubles ($1,300) to 1 million rubles ($11,900), while the Ryazan region hiked its commission to 805,000 rubles ($9,500).

Ukraine, which also allows foreign nationals to fight alongside its armed forces, previously identified more than 28,000 foreigners from 136 countries — excluding those from North Korea — who fought on the Russian side as of April 2026.

In a report published Thursday, Amnesty International said Russian recruitment efforts "frequently involved deceptive, coercive and exploitative practices."

"Testimonies... describe contracts signed without informed consent, confiscation of passports, restrictions on freedom of movement, inadequate training and threats against those seeking to leave military service," the NGO said, saying the practices "may amount to human trafficking."

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