

4.1.2. Reserve

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a) Inactive mobilisation reserve

There are two types of reserve in the Russian military system.[697] The general reserve[698] – which is called ‘inactive mobilisation reserve’ or ‘mobilisation human resource’[699] (Russian: *zapas*[700]) – is ‘a large pool of people’ who can be called up ‘during the special period in the leadup to a likely war’.[701] It consists of those who:

- were discharged from obligatory military service and added to the military reserve;
- completed military training at higher education institutions, graduating from programs for the training of reserve sergeants, petty officers, soldiers, or sailors;
- completed studies at a military educational institution or training at military training centers affiliated with federal state educational institutions under programs of training reserve officers, sergeants, soldiers, or sailors;
- did not take part in obligatory military service due to exemption or deferral;
- were not called up for obligatory military service before reaching the age of 30;
- did not take part in obligatory military service without having a legal basis for exemption and reached the age of 30;
- completed alternative civilian service;
- are women who have acquired military specialisations.[702]

Individuals in the inactive reserve do not have an active affiliation with the Russian armed forces.[703] According to the law, those in the reserve are classified into three categories based on their rank and age,[704] as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Individuals in the inactive mobilisation reserve

	Age of Russian nationals in the reserve		
	First category	Second category	Third category
Soldiers, sailors, sergeants, petty officers, warrant officers, and midshipmen	up to 40	up to 50	up to 55
Junior officers	up to 50	up to 55	up to 60
Majors, captains of the 3rd rank, lieutenant colonels, captains of the 2nd rank	up to 55	up to 60	up to 65
Colonels, captains of the 1st rank	up to 60	up to 65	
Senior officers	up to 65	up to 70	

Source: Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service, informal translation[705]

The 'partial mobilisation' held between 21 September 2022 and 31 October 2022 concerned persons included to the inactive mobilisation reserve.[706] Following the announcement of the 'partial mobilisation' in September 2022, the then-Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu, claimed that the size of Russia's inactive mobilisation reserve reached approximately 25 million people.[707]

b) Active mobilisation reserve

Russia also has an active reserve ('active mobilisation reserve') officially consisting of two million people.[708] As noted by researcher Igor Gretskiy,[709] the number of reservists in Russia is 'a state secret' but it can be lower than one million.[710] According to the law, the active reserve consists of individuals from the general inactive reserve, as well as of those in the inactive reserves of the Foreign Intelligence Service and the FSB, who sign a contract to voluntarily join the active reserve of the Russian armed forces or other troops and military formations.[711]

Russia's first mobilisation reserve, known as the Special Combat Army Reserve (BARS) was established in 2015 and consisted of 'individuals who had previously served in the army and signed a special 'reservist contract' with the MoD.[712] Active recruitment started in 2021, with a number of reservists increasing from several thousand to 100 000.[713] As noted by The Insider, initially, the reservist contract is signed for a duration of three years, with reservists undergoing training once a year. The source also noted that reservists are paid monthly stipends and receive salaries for the periods of training or deployment.[714] As reported by the Moscow Times, many reservists joined the so-called BARS battalions to participate in the war in Ukraine in February 2022 and subsequently signed military contracts with the MoD.[715]

On 28 October 2025, the State Duma adopted amendments[716] to the federal laws On Defence, On Military Duty and Military Service, and On the Status of Servicemen,[717] to allow individuals in the active mobilisation reserve to be called up for special trainings for defence of critically important infrastructure.[718] According to a Russian General Staff official, reservists would be responsible for 'critical infrastructure facilities, including energy and transport infrastructure', with the primary task to counter drone attacks.[719] While the MoD has stated that reservists would not be sent to perform tasks outside Russia,[720] the law itself does not explicitly impose such restrictions, as noted by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).[721] As of 10 November 2025, at least 20 Russian regions have started recruiting reservists as part of the newly enacted

law, with Tatarstan and Bashkortostan establishing units to protect oil refineries and petrochemical sites. With BARS units established in Kursk, Bryansk, and Belgorod oblasts already in 2024, Kursk and Bryansk oblasts will reportedly ‘form additional detachments to help thwart sabotage attempts and assist in emergency evacuations.’722

Furthermore, since July 2025, Russia has reportedly been forming an additional strategic reserve composed of soldiers who have signed contracts with the MoD.723 Citing ‘a Russian insider source’, ISW reported that this reserve will be composed of 292 000 individuals who have signed contracts with the MoD between January 2025 and September 2025. Due to ‘reduced casualty rates’ among the Russian military personnel during the summer 2025 in Ukraine, Russia could potentially withhold some of these recruits from immediate deployment to Ukraine.724

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