

4.2.8. Conditions of service

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a) Assignment to military units

Conscripts can serve in ground forces, navy, aerospace forces, strategic missile forces and airborne forces, military units dealing with logistical and technical support, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and the National Guard (*Rosgvardiya*).840 The distribution of conscripts to military units is carried out by military enlistment offices. During conscription procedures, conscripts have a possibility to indicate their preference regarding the type of the armed forces, but there is no guarantee that they will get to serve there.841 As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, some conscripts can pay a bribe to be able to choose the type of forces and even the location of the military unit.842 Otherwise, the assignment of conscripts depends on the needs of military units, 843 therefore, they can be sent anywhere in Russia,844 including to the border regions with Ukraine.845

The conditions of military service depend on a particular unit and its location, with some units providing 'relatively decent conditions.'846 Conscripts deployed to border regions with Ukraine – such as Kursk,847 Belgorod,848 and Bryansk oblasts849 – may find themselves in active combat zone, exposed to missile shelling and drone strikes by Ukraine, making their military service dangerous.850 According to Artem Klyga, most conscripts will not be deployed to the border regions with Ukraine; however, after the outbreak of hostilities in the Kursk region, Russian military personnel were redeployed there to prevent Ukrainian advances. Furthermore, since 2024, conscripts have been allowed to serve in the border troops of the FSB, positioning them directly at the border, which helps explain reports of casualties and missing conscripts.851

As reported by ISW in September 2025, the Russian armed forces have relied on conscripts to perform border security duties, including in Bryansk, Belgorod, and Kursk oblasts. Conscripts assigned to border guard duties participated in combat operations during the Ukrainian offensive into Kursk oblast, which generated considerable discontent within Russian society.852 In April 2025, the Ukrainian government's project 'I want to live' (*Hochu zhit*), which facilitates the voluntary surrender of Russian military personnel,853 published the names of 217 conscripts who had died in the war in Ukraine since February 2022.854 According to independent media source Vot Tak, the project clarified that the list included only individuals who died while serving as conscripts while those who signed a contract with the MoD were not included. Following verification of the names, Vot Tak reported that at least 72 of these conscripts were killed in Kursk and Belgorod oblasts.855

Sources also noted that conscripts can be deployed to serve in the occupied territories of Ukraine.856 According to the head of the legal department at *Shkola prizyvnika* (School of Conscript), cited by Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russian authorities consider these areas part of Russia and therefore can assign conscripts to serve there. However, the source noted that this does not appear to be a widespread practice.857 As noted by Artem Klyga, conscripts serving in border regions can legally be deployed to combat operations through 30-day assignments. In these cases, conscripts are not sent to frontline assaults but are usually involved in support roles, such as shooting down drones or digging trenches. Still, reports of such deployments by conscripts are not widespread.858

b) Pressure to sign contracts

The Russian authorities reportedly view mandatory military service as a source for recruiting contract soldiers.859 The practice of forcing conscripts into signing contracts began in late 2022 860 and intensified in 2024, becoming widespread across military units in Russia.861 Sources reported on conscripts being persuaded ,862 pressured and coerced,863 including by means of torture,864 or deceived into signing contracts.865 As noted by UN Special Rapporteur Mariana Katzarova, 'in at least one case, a person was shot dead for refusing to sign the contract.'866 According to Artem Klyga, these practices remain widespread, with no change observed after retaking of Kursk region by the Russian army. Once a contract is signed, even if it was signed on the first day of the military service, conscripts, in the status of contract soldiers, can be immediately deployed to the frontlines.867

Pressure on conscripts to sign contracts reportedly began upon their departure to the military unit,868 and included threats to their lives869 or disciplinary punishment.870 As noted by Artem Klyga, for example, in Tatarstan, conscripts were told they could stay in headquarters if they signed a contract; otherwise, they would be sent to Belgorod region and forced to sign contracts anyway.871 In Bashkortostan, military officials reportedly urged conscripts to sign contracts at the assembly point, threatening them with deployment to the frontline, to participate in so-called 'meat assaults' – infantry-led assaults with high death tolls – if they refused.872

In addition, there are reports of conscript's signatures being forged on the contracts with the MoD.873 According to Huseyn Aliyev, this practice seems to have replaced the use of direct pressure and coercion observed in 2024, which included violence, verbal intimidation, and public shaming of conscripts at the end of their service. Forging signatures 'has become systematised and standardised,' as it does not require any sort of intimidation or physical violence. Therefore, commanders appear to 'have the green light to sign contracts on behalf of conscripts', particularly when meeting recruitment quotas.874 In February 2025, a military prosecutor's office of a garrison in Chelyabinsk oblast reportedly confirmed that conscripts of five military units were misled about contract conditions, coerced or deceived into signing contracts, and, in some cases, had their signatures forged. Yet, the contracts remained in force,875 as the military prosecutor's office did not implement the mechanism for reversing the conscripts' status.876

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