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RUSSIA: 1 million men to be recruited, according to Novaya Gazeta

Russia will snap

A mass exodus afflicts Russia because few believe that only 300,000 men with military experience will be called up. The actual target is one million, according to Noble Peace Prize winning newspaper *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, a belief underscored by the aggressiveness of the regime's press gang methods.

By Diane Francis

Kyiv Post (27.09.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3SHo2Pf> – Thousands of

men without experience are chased down and loaded onto buses or planes for training and deployment to the front lines. Anti-war protesters, without military experience, are being arrested then forced to enlist or face jail. Students are snatched from schools in Siberia. Ukrainians inside occupied areas are being forced to join. Central Asian migrants are targeted, and non-Russian minorities are disproportionately drafted.

The result of this round-up is that borders and airports are clogged with lineups, and, two hours after Putin's announced mobilization, millions of Russians googled "how to break an arm at home" to evade. Polls now show that opposition to Putin's war increases slightly, but Russians remained imprisoned inside a military dictatorship. Even so, former U.S. Special Ambassador to Ukraine [Kurt Volker](#) said, at the Global Business Forum in Banff, that "something's going to snap on the Russia side. Putin has no way back."

Such a massive grassroots pushback against a partial mobilization bodes badly for Putin's attempt to replenish his battered armed forces. But it also bodes badly for the future of Russia in the long run. His conscription drive will simply create a larger ragtag army than already exists – one that has been outmaneuvered by the cunning Ukrainians armed by the West. To date, Kyiv has proven that quality and morale outflank quantity and demoralization. If Putin actually believes that 300,000 unwilling and hapless conscripts can turn the tide in Russia's favor, then he has once more succumbed to his twin delusions of overestimating his army and underestimating his foe's capability.

Another open secret in military circles is that the Russian army is as riddled with alcoholism as is Russian society – notably in the poor and remote regions where recruitment is most aggressive. Brawling and drunkenness are widespread among Russian soldiers. A drunken fight in occupied Kherson recently left three Russian soldiers dead, according to reports.

Russian military forbids alcohol from being available or sold within 300 meters of military bases in eastern Russia (where most recruits come from) but there are reports that, in war torn Ukraine, Russian troops trade fuel and food for alcohol. After the February 24 invasion, intoxication was prevalent as was also the case during the Donbas border conflict with Ukrainians that dragged on for eight years after Russia's first invasion in 2014.

But Putin's "partial" mobilization marks a new, sinister pivot, speculates German military expert Gustav Gressel. "The [Russian forces] are pretty much in disarray. This force is exhausted by now. It can't be regenerated by volunteers. My gut feeling is that Putin doesn't really care about the inferior quality [of new troops being assembled]. So, my guess is that the overall aim of this is to make Ukraine run out of bullets before Russia runs out of soldiers," he said.

In other words, Putin's strategy is to weaponize soldiers by using them as "cannon fodder". This would, if true, takes a page out of Stalin's hideous World War II "human-wave tactic" which consisted of pushing forward large numbers of inadequately armed or trained Russian infantry to grind down the Germans. Casualties back then were horrific, as they are now, but no one knows the number except Putin who admits to only 6,000 deaths – and yet he is calling up 300,000 more replacements. Even more shocking, his recruitment efforts are targeting Russian minorities such as Tatars, Asian ethnics in Siberia and the Far East, as well as Central Asian migrants who are working in Russia...not white Russians in European Russia.

"Look at the guys taken prisoner in the east of Ukraine. There are few soldiers with Slavic appearance among them. In my opinion, the chauvinist, racist and Nazi government of Russia is simply using [Central Asian] migrant workers [and Russians from Far East regions] as 'cannon fodder'. This is done so that there is less noise, so that the mothers of Russian

soldiers do not make a fuss when they receive the “Cargo 200” [soldier death notice],” said Valentina Chupik, a migrant rights activist who was deported last year from Russia.

The harvesting of minorities and the disadvantaged has upset leaders of Central Asian regimes, led by defiant Kazakhstan which was the first former Soviet state to criticize the Ukrainian invasion. Four countries have banned their citizens from serving as foreign mercenaries in Russia’s army and decreed that those caught defying the ban will receive five-year prison sentences. Also victimized, but inside Russia, are Asian or Turkic minorities who are being disproportionately called up.

“Crimean Tatars received about 90% of draft notices in Crimea, but make up 13 to 15 percent of the population of the peninsula. Such scale of mobilization can lead to a hidden genocide of the Crimean Tatar people,” said Yevhen Yaroshenko with Human rights organization Crimea SOS. Another spokesman from Buryatia, a Republic in Siberia bordering Mongolia, said: “When it comes to Buryatia, this is not a partial mobilization, this is a total mobilization. And it amazes me how people who know how much Vladimir Putin likes to lie believe that this will be a partial mobilization.” News organizations report that military police arrived at Buryat State University, after Putin’s announcement, “to take students straight from classes”.

Forcing ethnic populations to go to war is politically smarter than forcing those living in Russia’s big European cities who often have relatives or business links with Ukraine and Europe. But the strategy may backfire as word spreads about discrimination. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, for instance, has publicly encouraged draftees to “sabotage” Russian military efforts and has also offered guarantees of safety to Russian soldiers who surrender. To counter this, Putin has signed into law an edict that deserters, insubordinates, or those who refuse to serve will receive 10-

year prison sentences.

European countries bordering Russia have also decided to refuse entry to Russians seeking asylum from the war. Gabrielus Landsbergis, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, said Russian draft dodgers won't change the system. "Lithuania will not be granting asylum to those who are simply running from responsibility. Russians should stay and fight. Against Putin," he stated on Twitter.

News of military setbacks in Ukraine, the draftee rush for the exits, plus Europe's tough stance toward all Russians, is making an impact on the Russian public. "Currently, about 20% of Russians say they do not agree with Russia's actions in Ukraine, up from 14% in March. They are more likely to be young, residents of Moscow or other large cities, and consumers of news from the internet," [according](#) to reliable polling. Besides that, an estimated 6 million Russians have left the country to live abroad since Putin took power 22 years ago. This year, another 4 million left for "travel or business purposes", according to [official government data published](#) by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), wrote the independent newspaper *Moscow Times*. It also [reported](#) in May that "it's unclear how many of these Russians have since returned to their home country."

A telling poll by Levada Center in Moscow teased out negative attitudes of Russians by avoiding direct questions about Putin or politics, but by asking them to describe their emotional reactions to the "Military Action in Ukraine". It reveals underlying concerns and a demographic divide.

Cracks are appearing in Russia, and Putin's final energy card in Europe has backfired and emboldened the continent. But neither side in the conflict will cede ground or negotiate, which means the war will likely last well into 2023, added Kurt Volcker. "The winter will be worse for Russia than Ukraine," he said. "Russia is forward-deployed with vulnerable

supply chains. Ukraine has home field advantage with supplies and local support. Ukraine will continue to advance, it won't be easy, and the war will last well into 2023 unless something snaps in Russia."

Volcker doesn't believe that Putin will use nuclear weapons, or that Western resolve will ebb "because the war crimes and atrocities appall people around the world." As for his statement that "until something snaps in Russia" he meant that history will repeat. In 1982, Russian strongman Leonid Brezhnev died, weak leadership followed, Russia's unsuccessful war in Afghanistan ended, and the Soviet Union dissolved. "Putin is in his 70s, he has health issues, and is in an unsustainable position. Russia can't win. The regions will stop paying attention to Moscow, and Siberia, Tatarstan and others will drift away. The Center won't hold. The oligarchs, military, and media won't want another strong man."

But Putin remains in control, tightens his grip over the military, and lately his critics have been falling out of windows or down stairs. If the war becomes a stalemate and grinds on, will he use a nuke or be replaced? Both outcomes are unlikely. And Western nuclear powers must continue to forcefully and publicly articulate the Armageddon a Putin nuke would unleash on Russia and, if he uses one, retaliate in kind. But now they must re-double sanctions and heavy weapon shipments to help Ukraine to defeat the tsunami of "cannon fodder" that Putin plans to release. Failing a regime change anytime soon, only rhetorical and artillery escalations will turn the tide and free Ukraine and the world from this odious military dictatorship.

Photo credits: Kyiv Post

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