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Russia to expand number of men liable for compulsory military service

By Caleb Davis

July 21, 2023 12:52 PM GMT+3 · Updated July 21, 2023



[1/2] Russian conscripts called up for military service line up before their departure for garrisons as they gather at a recruitment centre in Simferopol, Crimea, April 25, 2023. REUTERS/Alexey Pavlishak/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)



July 21 (Reuters) - Russia will keep compulsory military service for 18-year-olds, state media reported on Friday, permanently increasing the number of young men liable to conscription, after lawmakers dropped a proposal not to start before the age of 21.

All men in Russia are currently required to do a year's military service between the ages of 18 and 27, or equivalent training while in higher education.

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Andrei Kartapolov, a former general who chairs the defence committee of the lower house of parliament, or State Duma, [had proposed](#) that the conscription period be pushed back in stages to ages 21-30.

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But on Friday he was quoted by the TASS news agency as saying: "(It) was decided to keep the lower limit at 18 years, because that's exactly the age when a lot of guys want to go and serve."

Military service has long been a sensitive issue in Russia, where many go to great lengths to avoid being handed conscription papers during the twice-yearly call-up periods.

Their fears only grew when a number of conscripts were sent to fight in Russia's war in Ukraine, despite assurances to the contrary, and with the unexpected mobilisation of 300,000 men last autumn for what Moscow calls its "special military operation".

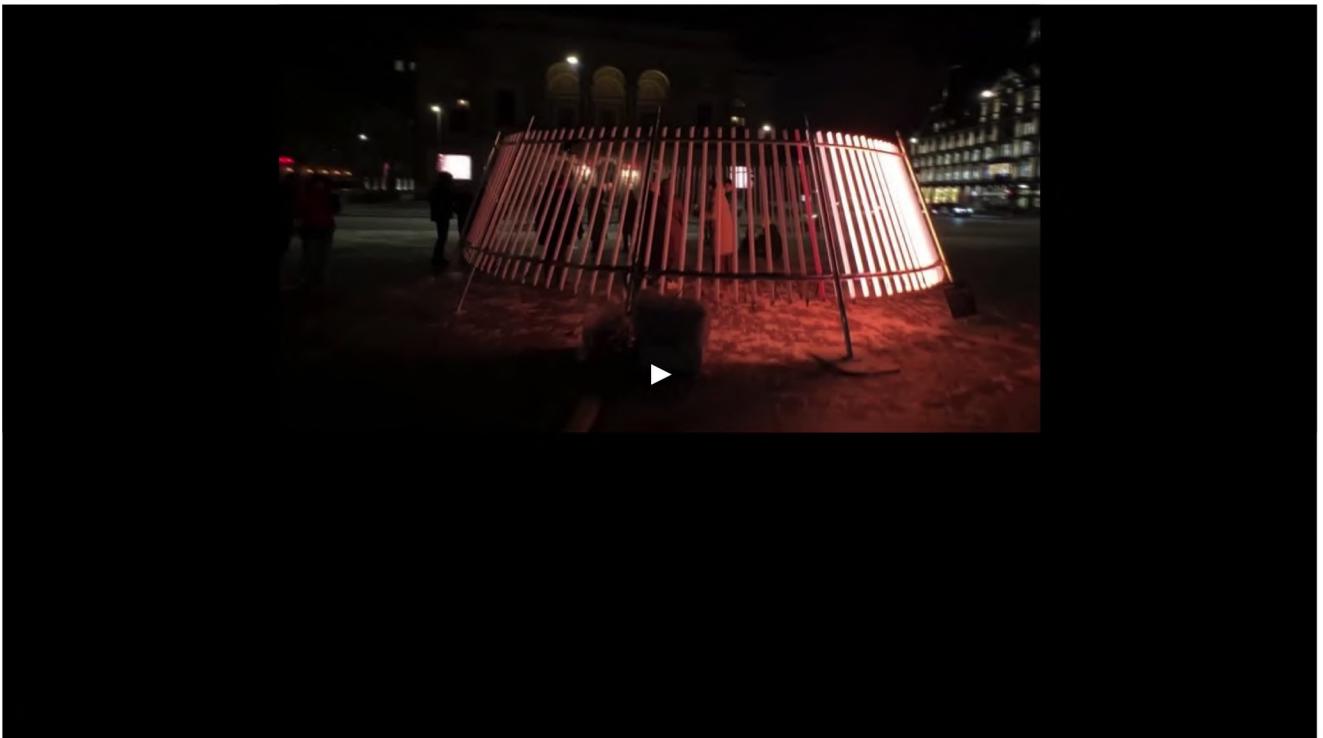
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The seemingly chaotic call-up process triggered rare [public criticism](#), and drove hundreds of thousands to flee Russia to avoid being sent to fight.

Last year, Russia announced a plan to boost its professional and conscripted combat personnel by more than 30% to 1.5 million, an ambitious task made harder by its heavy but undisclosed casualties in the war.

[In April](#), legislation was passed allowing conscription papers to be served online, making it harder to avoid military service.

And last Tuesday, parliament extended by at least five years the maximum age at which men who have completed compulsory service can be [mobilised](#) - to 55, in the case of some junior ranks, and to 70 for the most senior officers.



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