



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Warfare; Russia; Ukraine

THE PRIGOZHIN METHOD OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT

Repeated battlefield failures and mounting casualties on the part of the Russian military has elevated the importance to the Kremlin of the country's paramilitary proxies – in particular the Wagner Group of mercenaries controlled by oligarch (and Kremlin insider) Yevgeny Prigozhin. Among the new roles now being assumed by Prigozhin and his cronies is that of military recruitment. In recent weeks, the oligarch has taken on an increasingly prominent role helping to draft Russian prisoners for the Kremlin's war effort.

Prigozhin's recruitment methods include promises of reduced sentences and money, specifically "100,000 rubles a month [\$1,600], plus 100,000 as combat pay; in the event of death, the compensation would be 5 million rubles and the title 'Hero of Russia.'" Families of those killed in battle, meanwhile, are to receive 300,000 rubles and a medal of courage instead. Most disturbing, however, has been the recruitment criteria used by Prigozhin. According to one Russian inmate, the Kremlin is drafting the worst criminal offenders, and is planning to recruit rapists – who so far have not been drafted for fear of "causing discord" in the country's military units – later this Fall. (*Worldcrunch*, November 20, 2022)

MOSCOW IS RUNNING OUT OF MISSILES

Russia has used up some 70% of its arsenal of high precision missiles, and is now running out of sophisticated projectiles to use in its offensive against Ukraine. In the aftermath of its mid-November missile attack on Ukraine, in which some 90 missiles were fired at Kyiv and other population centers, Moscow has 539 missiles remaining, writes journalist Vladimir Khomyakov for internet publication *The Page*. This total, Khomyakov estimates, includes "up to 121 *Iskander* missiles; up to 248 *Kalibr* missiles; [and] up to 170 *Kh-101/Kh-555* missiles." This tally is strategically significant, Khomyakov maintains. "Hence, since the invasion, Russia has spent a total of 1305 missiles (70%) out of the 1,844 it had by February 24, 2022. The 539 remaining missiles will be enough for five or six strikes similar to those of November 15." (*The Page*, November 16, 2022)

MOSCOW LEANS ON MINSK

Amid ongoing troubles with its war effort in Ukraine, the Kremlin is drawing closer to the government of Alexandr Lukashenko in Belarus. At a recent meeting with his Belarusian counterpart, Viktor Khrenin, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu took pains to stress the "special importance" of the strategic partnership between the two countries. "Belarus has been and remains our reliable partner. It is particularly important today, amid unprecedented pressure from the collective West and an undeclared war against our countries," Shoigu pointed out.

Of particular value to Moscow, in light of its current geopolitical situation, is Minsk's determination "to oppose the hostile policy of the US and its allies, and readiness to work together to ensure the military security of the Union State [between the two countries]." This includes "activities aimed at ensuring combat coordination between Russian and Belarusian military units included in a regional group of forces are taking place in Belarus based on a decision made by the two countries' presidents," Shoigu said. (Itar-TASS, December 3, 2022)

UKRAINE STRIKES BACK

As part of its ongoing counteroffensive, Ukraine's military appears to be increasingly targeting installations within the Russian Federation itself. On December 5th, drone strikes targeted two airbases located deep inside Russia in an attack that killed three Russian military servicemen and inflicted some damage on Russian military materiel. The facilities targeted in the attack had been involved in launching strikes on Ukrainian territory hours earlier. While Kyiv has stopped short of formally claiming responsibility for the strikes, Ukrainian officials have suggested on social media that the attacks could be attributed to the Ukrainian armed forces. (*NBC News*, December 5, 2022)