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Issue Paper RUSSIA SELECTED MILITARY SERVICE ISSUES May 1996

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the dissolution of the USSR, with its armed forces of more than 4 million, the Russian army has been reduced to about 1.5 million persons (*The Washington Post* 8 Apr. 1995). Military service is compulsory in Russia for males 18 to 27 years of age (AI Apr. 1995, 18). In the 1980s, the length of military service was reduced from two years to eighteen months, but legislative changes in 1995 increased it again to two years (Reuters 30 Apr. 1995).

While the constitution provides for the right to alternative civilian service, the Russian government has not yet passed enabling legislation or amended the Criminal Code^[1] to make alternative civilian service possible (HRW Dec. 1995, 230; AI Apr. 1995, 18). According to Amnesty International, "young men continue to risk imprisonment for refusing military service on conscientious grounds" (ibid.).

The war in Chechnya has thrown the Russian military and its capabilities into the spotlight. According to one report, "at the height of battle, the brass sent in naval units from the Far East, police from St. Petersburg and many young recruits who had never taken part in even the simplest military exercise" (*The Washington Post* 8 Apr. 1995). The events in Chechnya have brought the issues of evasion and desertion to the fore (AI Apr. 1995, 19). According to *The Boston Globe*, a number of mothers of conscripts have tracked down their sons in various army bases in the country and taken them home (*The Boston Globe* 24 Jan. 1995). Some have gone so far as to follow their sons to Chechnya and pull them off the battlefield (ibid.).

This paper will examine some of the major issues concerning military service in Russia in light of the crisis that many, including politicians and military leaders, say Russia's military is facing (*The Toronto Star* 5 Nov. 1995). Finances and manpower are two of the major problems that have plagued the operation of the Russian military in 1995. The war in Chechnya, which has cost the armed forces at least 1.9 trillion roubles ([US]\$430 million) has also exacerbated its problems (OMRI 25 Aug. 1995). This paper will focus primarily on the situation since December 1994 when the Russian army entered the Chechen Republic.

Documentation which provides detail and corroboration is limited among the sources consulted for this paper, and oral sources who could or would comment were not available at the time of writing. However, it provides background information on the subject of military service that the reader may find useful.

1.1 Chronology of Selected Legislation and Decrees

11 February 1993

The Law "On Military Obligations and Military Service" is passed (RFERL 1 Apr. 1994, 39). (A copy of the text of this law is available in the IRB Regional Documentation Centres.)

14 December 1994

The Duma approves the first reading of a draft bill on alternative civilian service (Interfax 20 Nov. 1995). In November 1995, President Boris Yeltsin urges Duma chair Ivan Rybkin to speed the adoption of the draft (ibid.).

7 April 1995

The Duma adopts Russian Federation Law N^o. 69 "On Introducing Changes and Additions to the Russian Federal Law 'On Military Service Obligation and Military Service'." The law extends the duration of draft military service from eighteen months to two years (Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvyy 30 Apr. 1995; *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 4 May 1995a). Graduates with higher education will serve twelve months (ibid.; ITAR-TASS 7 Apr. 1995). Under the provisions of the constitution, the Federation Council has two weeks to discuss a law passed by the Duma (Interfax 11 Oct. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 16 May 1995). The Federation Council fails to vote on this law within the time period and, as a result, it is sent to President Yeltsin who signs it on 29 April 1995 in the absence of a Federation Council vote (ibid.; *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 4 May 1995a). Prior to the changes, college graduates received deferments while they were in school and then went directly into the reserves (AP 30 Apr. 1995).

29 April 1995.

Yeltsin signs Decree N^o. 430 "On Deferment of Military Service for Certain Categories of Citizens" (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 4 May 1995b). According to the text of the decree, deferment will be allowed for: "citizens receiving post-higher-education vocational training at state educational institutions of higher vocational training and scientific institutions offering higher vocational training—for the duration of their training and examinations"; it also allows for deferment for "citizens who have gone directly...into full-time work in their specialty in state institutions, organizations, or enterprises upon graduating from higher vocational training institutions—for the duration of that work" (ibid.; AP 30 Apr. 1995).

29 April 1995

Yeltsin signs Edict N^o. 431 "On the April-June 1995 Military Service Draft and the Discharge of Soldiers, Seamen, Sergeants, Petty Officers and Military Construction Personnel Who Have Completed Their Military Service" (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 4 May 1995c). The decree calls for 209,800 men born between 1968 and 1977 to be drafted and for those who have completed their service to be discharged (ibid.; ITAR-TASS 30 Apr. 1995).

3 July 1995

Yeltsin signs presidential Edict N^o. 633 "On the Stationing of Organs of Military Administration, Combined Units, Military Units, Establishments, and Organizations of the Russian Federation Armed Forces on the Territory of the Chechen Republic," which allows for a permanent presence of the Russian military in the republic (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 5 July 1995; OMRI 5 July 1995).

20 July 1995

Further amendments to the Law "On Military Service Obligations and Military Service" are passed by the Duma. The amendments: exempt those previously drafted for an 18-month period from the new 2-year period; provide for an 18-month term of service for those who serve in "trouble spots" (such as Chechnya) or participate in combat operations; and restore deferment for draftees who have to support a single parent who is over 50 years old if the parent has no other children (*Krasnaya Zvezda* 21 July 1995; Interfax 20 July 1995; OMRI 21 July 1995). The Federation Council reportedly rejects the amendments in favour of requiring all conscripts to serve a two-year term unless they have been serving in the "trouble spots"—Chechnya, Tajikistan and Georgia (Radio Rossii 4 Oct. 1995; Interfax 11 Oct. 1995).

27 September 1995

Yeltsin signs Decree N^o. 971 "On the Drafting of Russian Federation Citizens for Military Service in October-December 1995 and On the Discharge of Soldiers, Sailors, Noncommissioned Officers, Petty Officers, and Military Construction Workers Who Have Completed Their Established Period of Military Service" (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 30 Sept. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 10 Oct. 1995). The decree sets the number of draftees at 224,400 (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 30 Sept. 1995; OMRI 29 Sept. 1995). Those who were called up in the autumn of 1993 are to be transferred to the reserves and those with college education who were called up in the autumn of 1994 will be discharged (ITAR-TASS 29 Sept. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 10 Oct. 1995).

25 October 1995

The Duma passes the "Law on Defense." The law restricts the number of departments that are entitled to conscripts. It is sent to the Federation Council where it is expected to undergo extensive debate (ibid. 27 Oct. 1995).

15 November 1995

The Duma overrides a Federation Council veto of its proposed amendments to the Law "On Military Service Obligations and Military Service" (OMRI 16 Nov. 1995). The Federation Council had wanted all conscripts to serve the new two-year term, including those who had originally been drafted for 18 months (ibid.; Interfax 25 Oct. 1995). The bill is submitted to Yeltsin (OMRI 16 Nov. 1995).

4 December 1995

Yeltsin vetoes the amendments on military service submitted on 15 November 1995 citing "procedural violations" (ibid. 5 Dec. 1995). However, Yeltsin does decree on 3 December 1995 that those who have been wounded or those who have been in combat duty for at least one month may be released from service after serving 18 months (ibid. 5 Dec. 1995).

6 December 1995

The Duma passes the final draft of the 1996 budget, which increases the military's budget by 3.5 trillion roubles (\$764 million) (ibid. 7 Dec. 1995b). The 1995 budget reportedly was R10 trillion (ibid. 26 May 1995).

19 December 1995

The Federation Council rejects amendments to the military service law approved by the Duma on 8 December 1995 following Yeltsin's 4 December 1995 veto of earlier amendments (OMRI 20 Dec. 1995).

22 December 1995

The Duma overrides the Federation Council's rejection of the amendments to the military service law and the legislation is sent to President Yeltsin (OMRI 28 Dec. 1995). According to OMRI, on 9 January

1996, Ekho Moskvyy reports that Yeltsin rejects the draft legislation as he had done on 4 December 1995 (OMRI10 Jan. 1996).

1.2 Lengthening Military Service

Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and his generals have long supported an increase in length of military service to counter the staffing crisis caused by widespread draft evasion (AP 30 Apr. 1995; *The Washington Post* 8 Apr. 1995), deferments and the short term of service (ibid.). Their requests for a longer term were realized in April 1995 when Russian Federation Law N^o. 69 increased the term of service (see Chronology of Legislation). The change in length of military service to two years could reduce the shortfall in personnel from 700,000 to 270,000 (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 29 Apr. 1995).

Some sources claimed that instead of discharging 230,000 men in the fall of 1995, only 19,000 would be discharged (*The Washington Post* 13 Oct. 1995; *Segodnya* 7 Oct. 1995). Col-General Vyacheslav Zherebtsov, chief of the Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate of the General Staff, reportedly stated that the army would "not permit manifestations of mass dissatisfaction or attempts [of] collective desertion" (ibid.). According to Mayak Radio, the fall 1995 draft was to have called-up university graduates for a 12-month period pursuant to Russian Federation Law N^o. 69 (see Chronology of Legislation) (Mayak Radio 21 Oct. 1995). Graduates of universities with military training facilities can choose to serve for a 12-month period as a sergeant after which time they will be transferred to the reserves, or they may choose to enter the army as an officer and serve for a two-year term (ibid.). In January 1996 Zherebtsov claimed the autumn 1995 draft had been successful, calling up some 224,000 men (OMRI 31 Jan. 1996). He also noted that there were 31,000 cases of draft evasion during the call-up campaign (ibid.).

A presidential decree of 29 April 1995 exempting graduates who go directly into full-time employment in state institutions (see Chronology of Legislation) prompted a writer in *Segodnya* to speculate that "without any doubt, in the next few months, a stable market price for a certificate of government employment for future graduates will be established, and there will be no rise in the number of draftees" (*Segodnya* 4 May 1995).

As the debate continued regarding the draft legislation to amend the length of military service in some cases (see Chronology of Legislation), Defence Minister Pavel Grachev issued two directives, one stating that soldiers can only serve in a hot spot for a period of six months after which time they will serve the rest of their two years in other places, and that those soldiers will be released earlier than everyone else (*Krasnaya Zvezda* 10 Oct. 1995).

NOTE

[1] Yeltsin rejected a new criminal code, which was passed by the Duma on 2 November 1995, and now a "conciliation commission" is to be established to amend the draft code (OMRI 7 Dec. 1995a). In April 1996, ITAR-TASS reported that the Duma's Defence Committee was preparing to discuss the bill on alternative civilian service (ITAR-TASS 15 Apr. 1996). [\[back\]](#)

2. THE RUSSIAN MILITARY

2.1 Composition of the Military

The Russian military forces are composed of conscript and contract (voluntary) soldiers and an officer corps (RFERL 1 Apr. 1994, 37, 40). Conscripts serve in a number of institutions including the Ministry of Defence, Federal Border Service, Interior Ministry Internal Troops, Ministry for Emergencies, Railroad Troops, Federal Security Service, Detached Kremlin Regiment, Federal Government Communications and Information Agency, Main Protection Directorate, and the Foreign Intelligence

Service (*Moskovskiy Komsomolets* 25 Apr. 1995). In June 1995, Grachev announced long-term plans to reorganize the armed forces by reducing the five types of forces that now exist (ground troops, navy, air force, air-defence force, and strategic missile troops) to three (ground troops, navy and air force) (Interfax 7 June 1995).

There are as many generals and high ranking officers now as there were in the Soviet army, making the Russian military exceptionally top-heavy (*The Washington Post* 8 Apr. 1995). At the same time, there is such a shortage of recruits in the lower ranks that officers are often forced to perform menial tasks (ibid.; *Current History* Oct. 1995, 323; *Moskovskiy Novosti* 1-8 Oct. 1995), which reportedly causes frustration that "exacerbates hazing and increases draft-evasion" (ibid.).

The Russian military began recruiting some contract soldiers in 1993 (RFERL 1 Apr. 1994, 36; *Segodnya* 4 May 1995). Many officers' wives have reportedly signed up for contracts, often to gain a second family income (*Moskovskiy Novosti* 1-8 Oct. 1995; *Segodnya* 4 May 1995). One report claims that "in some divisions, up to 20 percent of personnel are women, including machine-gunners, grenade throwers, and those on other combat duties" (ibid.). The report further states that none of these women have been sent to Chechnya (ibid.). According to Col-General Zherebtsov, chief of the Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate of the General Staff, up to 30 per cent of the armed forces are contract soldiers (FBIS Editorial Report 18 Sept. 1995). He also noted that since contract service began in 1993, about 50,000 such soldiers have resigned (ibid.). In a subsequent report, Zherebtsov noted that in 1994 alone 15,000 contract soldiers left the forces because of low pay (*Krasnaya Zvezda* 10 Oct. 1995).

Further implementation of the idea of a contract army has been discussed and debated in Russia, but the Defence Ministry notes that Russia cannot finance such an army today (*The Washington Post* 8 Apr. 1995; *Current History* Oct. 1995, 323). Lt. Col. Ivan Skrylnik claimed in an April 1995 report that few people would sign up on a contractual basis for a wage less than 1.5 million roubles (about [US]\$300) a month (*The Washington Post* 8 Apr. 1995). Skrylnik further noted that even with 20 years service in the armed forces his salary was only R800,000 a month (ibid.). The cost of contract soldiers is a factor in decreasing their number in favour of draftees (*Moskovskiy Novosti* 1-8 Oct. 1995).

The Defence Ministry has argued that the military must bring its numbers up to full strength in order to maintain combat readiness (ITAR-TASS 29 Sept. 1995). According to the Commander-in-Chief of the ground forces, some units are only staffed at 30 to 50 per cent of their target strength (Interfax 7 June 1995). The commander further noted that up to 11 per cent of those conscripted in the fall 1994 call-up "were of poor health" (ibid.).

According to Col-General Zherebtsov, more than half of all conscripts are from rural areas and an increasing number of conscripts, reportedly 20 per cent in 1994, "have grown up in orphanages, child homes or had been brought up by single parents" (*Foreign Report* 23 Mar. 1995, 6). The report also states that "many of those who join the army are poorly educated peasants or drunks, drug-addicts, criminals or other social misfits" (ibid.).

2.2 Conditions in Chechnya

The Russian military has come under scrutiny since the invasion of Chechnya in December 1994 (*Financial Times* 4 Feb. 1995). Several high ranking officers opposed the actions in Chechnya claiming that the operation was poorly planned and executed (*The Ottawa Citizen* 4 Feb. 1995, A8; *Financial Times* 4 Feb. 1995). Some senior military officers also complained that officers were "unprepared [and] the use of conscript troops was senseless" (ibid.). The lack of funding for training has also been

identified as a reason for organizational difficulties in the invasion of Chechnya (*The Christian Science Monitor* 13 Jan. 1995).

An *Izvestia* report in January 1995 claimed that a Special Militia Detachment (OMON) unit from the Ekaterinburg area which had been sent to Chechnya in December 1994 left the republic and returned home (OMRI 10 Jan. 1995). Some of the reasons for the premature withdrawal included: claims from within the unit that it had been sent to Chechnya without adequate food, arms, or heat (*The Ottawa Citizen* 4 Feb. 1995, A8); and low unit morale caused by not having had their wages paid since the beginning of December (Russia TV 11 Jan. 1995). The Interior Ministry (MVD), however, stated that the unit had been replaced as scheduled, and the unit commander contends that it had declined "a proposal" to stay on in Chechnya because some 80 per cent of its members were suffering from colds they caught while in the republic (OMRI 11 Jan. 1995). According to an *Ottawa Citizen* report, at one point, the unit, reportedly armed with only submachine guns, truncheons and tear gas, was sent into action against a group of fourteen Chechen tanks (*The Ottawa Citizen* 4 Feb. 1995, A8).

Writing in the paper *Rossiyskiye Vesti* a couple of weeks after the invasion of Chechnya, Lt-General Nikolay Tsymbal, a veteran of the Great Patriotic War (World War II), as well as the Vietnam and Afghan wars, claimed that the Russian army was so demoralized that it could not be considered combat-ready (BBC Summary 11 Jan. 1995). Tsymbal claimed that the army's efforts went to "procuring potatoes for itself, building housing, and [it] has no opportunity—even material—to boost the level of combat training" (ibid.). Another report also refers to the "self provisioning" of the military, meaning that most units are so busy trying to find their own sources of food, housing, and heat, often through barter or trade with suppliers, that they do not have time to contend with the issue of combat-readiness (*Current History* Oct. 1995, 324).

2.3 Financial Considerations

In an article in October 1995, Aleksey Arbatov, member of the Duma's Defence Committee, noted that Russia was striving to maintain a military "comparable in strength to that of the United States on money that amount[ed] to 7-8 percent of the U.S. defence budget (in the current rate of exchange)" (*Moskovskiye Novosti* 1-8 Oct. 1995). According to Col-General Vorobyev, Chief of the Main Directorate for Budget and Finance of the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, in the past three years the legislative authorities have budgeted between one third and two-fifths of the amount deemed by the Defence Ministry to be what it needs to function normally and maintain combat readiness (FBIS Editorial Report 18 Sept. 1995).

In July 1995, First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets admitted that the Russian military is underfinanced (ITAR-TASS 27 July 1995). According to Col-General Vorobyev, the Defence Ministry is one of the country's largest debtors and as of 1 July 1995, owed more than R9 trillion to its creditors (FBIS Editorial Report 18 Sept. 1995). In a May 1995 decision, the government approved a defence budget of about R10 trillion and, according to the Finance Minister, it would be up to the military to decide "whether to buy military hardware or uniforms" (OMRI 26 May 1995). The Commander of the Russian Air-Borne Troops, Col-General Yevgeniy Panodkolzin claimed, in an October 1995 interview, that Russia's military cannot initiate reform under its present financial crisis (Interfax 6 Oct. 1995).

2.3.1 Wages

The military has had difficulty paying the wages of servicemen and payments are sometimes months in arrears (*Current History* Oct. 1995, 323; *Trud* 4 Nov. 1995; *The Washington Post* 13 Oct. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 31 Aug. 1995; OMRI 30 June 1995). During a round table conference on the 1996 budget, a Defence Ministry official stated that because of its debts to personnel and suppliers,

which total R12 trillion, the military would not be able pay its servicemen or civilians (ITAR-TASS 27 Sept. 1995; OMRI 25 Aug. 1995).

According to the Law "On the Status of Servicemen," servicemen's pay is to be indexed to the country's minimum wage (*Krasnaya Zvezda* 12 Sept. 1995). While the minimum wage in Russia was increased in May 1995 and again in August 1995, in September 1995 it was still unclear if and when the military would receive pay raises and how much they would be (ibid.). However, the Interior Ministry secured a 54 per cent wage increase for its rank and file and command personnel, effective 1 September 1995 (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 9 Nov. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 12 Sept. 1995). One report notes the disparity between wages in the military and other occupations. It claims that the average monthly wage in industry was over R550,000 and the subsistence minimum per person is more than R300,000, while the wage for a contract soldier is R134,000; supplements bring it up to R278,000 (ibid.). In August 1995, *Moscow News* printed a story of two contract soldiers who had just returned from Chechnya making claims that the Defence Ministry had provided them with bogus contracts, reneged on the agreed upon payment scheme, not properly equipped them, and otherwise treated them unfairly (*Moscow News* 11-17 Aug. 1995).

2.3.2 The Food Crisis

In July 1995, Grachev claimed that the food situation for the Russian armed forces was critical, especially in the Far North, and he asked the government to provide an additional R2.5-3 trillion to feed the army (*Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskv*y 22 July 1995; *The Ottawa Citizen* 29 July 1995; OMRI 24 July 1995a). Human Rights Watch claimed that in "certain areas of Siberia, recruits were given only animal feed to eat" (HRW Dec. 1995, 230). A Defence Ministry spokesman stated that "if no radical decision is made shortly, the Russian army may well find itself on the verge of starvation" (*The Ottawa Citizen* 29 July 1995).

In August 1995, the head of the Defence Ministry's Central Food Directorate, Vyacheslav Savinov, went on Russian television to plead for assistance from the government to help feed the troops (ITAR-TASS 22 Aug. 1995; OMRI 24 Aug. 1995). Savinov stated that in seven months in 1995 the Defence Ministry had accrued R700 billion (\$160 million) in debts owed to suppliers such as bakeries and meat combines (ITAR-TASS 22 Aug. 1995; OMRI 24 Aug. 1995). Savinov also claimed that the situation was approaching a critical level "when there will simply be nothing [with which] to feed the personnel of the armed forces" (ibid.).

Valentin Panichev, Russia's main military procurator, claimed in an interview that the financing of the military had to be changed or Russia might face another incident like the one on Russkiy Island (ibid.). In 1993, four sailors stationed on Russkiy Island died of malnutrition and maltreatment (OMRI 22 Sept. 1995, 26; *The Ottawa Citizen* 29 July 1995). Sailors who had survived the ordeal were reported to be 20 to 70 pounds underweight "having been fed nothing but porridge and potatoes for months" (ibid.). Several senior officers were fired as a result of this incident (ibid.; OMRI 22 Sept. 1995, 26). In September 1995, after inspecting the region, Grachev remarked that the situation there had improved greatly and the new command had things under control (*Mayak Radio* 15 Sept. 1995).

In response to the food crisis, in July 1995, the Duma passed a resolution recommending that the Central Bank set aside R1,800 billion to assist in supplying food for the armed services (Interfax 21 July 1995). In September 1995, President Boris Yeltsin "ruled to earmark 2,257,900 million rubles (some 500 million dollars) for the food provision of federal troops" (ITAR-TASS 8 Sept. 1995).

These problems come at a time when Valentin Panichev stated in an interview with ITAR-TASS

that "hundreds of conscript soldiers and sailors are underweight and the chances of restoring their normal weight during their service are small" (ITAR-TASS 22 Aug. 1995). The following account of the conscripts from the spring 1995 draft highlights the problem:

Russian military conscripts are less healthy, more prone to suicide, less educated, and more likely to be criminals than was the case three years ago, the military's top tank officer said on 11 October. General Aleksandr Galkin added that the health of new conscripts is "catastrophic." In the spring draft, 31% of the conscripts were rejected for diseases in their internal organs, 20% for surgical reasons, and 19% for mental disturbances. Galkin reported that the number of suicides rose by 23% over the last seven years and deaths caused by alcohol addiction were up 80%. Only 7,000 conscripts (3%) have a higher education and 31% have not finished secondary school. He added that 11,000 conscripts are former convicts (OMRI 13 Oct. 1995).

Another report, which also noted that 70 per cent of those called-up were rejected for health reasons, stated that those who were healthy when they began their military service, usually were sick with such ailments as "ulcers, hazing injuries or chronic respiratory problems" by the time they completed their service (*The Toronto Star* 5 Nov. 1995).

At the end of October 1995, the Russian land forces' logistics chief, Lt. General Vladimir Kutuzov, commenting on the pre-winter food procurement efforts, claimed that "even remote garrisons beyond the polar circle, in Siberia and the Far East are now well stocked in vegetables and foodstuffs for the coming winter" (ITAR-TASS 30 Oct. 1995). Corroboration of this could not be found in the sources consulted by the DIRB.

2.3.3 Utility Bills and Disconnection of Power

Many instances have been reported of military bases and other installations having their power supplies cut because of non-payment of debts (Russian Public Television First Channel 23 Sept. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 31 Aug. 1995; OMRI 8 Sept. 1995). According to General Vladimir Osadchiy, the head of the Main Budget Department, "virtually all of Russia's garrisons experienced interruptions in the supply of hot water, gas and electricity" (Interfax 12 July 1995). Osadchiy also claimed that the R1.3 trillion budgeted for the Armed Forces to pay its utility bills falls short of the R5.5 trillion that is required (OMRI 21 Sept. 1995). On 23 September 1995, the government signed a resolution forbidding the disconnection of power to military installations (Russian Public Television First Channel 23 Sept. 1995; OMRI 25 Sept. 1995).

However, even after the government directive, reports persisted of military bases having their power, gas and water supplies cut (Interfax 8 Oct. 1995; *ibid.* 6 Oct. 1995). In early November 1995, the government again passed a resolution banning supply cuts by vital civil facilities including power, water and sewage, to the defence and other essential ministries (OMRI 9 Nov. 1995) and shortly thereafter, a draft law calling for a three-year prison term for those who violate the resolution was sent to Yeltsin (*ibid.* 17 Nov. 1995). On 23 November 1995, Yeltsin issued another decree banning power cut-offs and also fired Col-General Vorobyev, claiming that the head of the Main Directorate for Budget and Finance of the Defense Ministry had not complied with a government resolution to ensure troops and power suppliers were paid on time (*ibid.* 27 Nov. 1995).

2.3.4 Equipment and Housing

As a result of underfunding, most of the military's budget has gone to wages, food, clothing, etc. and not to military facilities and new equipment (FBIS Editorial Report 18 Sept. 1995). For example, in

1991, the Defence Ministry ordered 585 new aircraft, and in 1995 it ordered only two (ibid.). A three-year program in 1993-1995 to provide 220,000 apartments for soldiers received 83 per cent of its allotted annual financing in the first year, 46 per cent in 1994 and in the first six months of 1995 received only 26 per cent. As a result, only half of the apartments will be built by the end of the program period (ibid.; OMRI 18 Oct. 1995). As a further example of the extent of the problem, over 7,000 of the 11,000 officers in the Russian Air-Borne Troops do not have apartments (Interfax 6 Oct. 1995). Mark Galeotti states that thousands of officers are reportedly forced to live in "the cheapest slums or even unheated tank sheds or tents" (Galeotti 1995, 131). Even the chief of the Main Directorate of Operation of the General Staff, Col-General Viktor Barynkin admitted that "unfortunately, the state cannot provide decent conditions of life and everyday life [sic] for the servicemen" (FBIS Editorial Report 18 Sept. 1995).

3. MILITARY SERVICE

3.1 Violence in the Armed Forces—Dedovshchina (Hazing)

According to several sources, *dedovshchina*, or hazing, is a serious problem in the Russian armed forces (*Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995; Reuters 9 July 1995; *The Washington Post* 13 Oct. 1995). The practice includes beatings and the humiliation of new recruits by more senior personnel (ibid.; *Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995; *Country Reports 1994 1995*, 936). One report claims that "in the barracks, soldiers are divided into those who beat and those who are beaten" (*Golos* 1994). According to some sources, the prospect of having to face *dedovshchina* is the main reason why draftees attempt to avoid military service, some going so far as self-mutilation (ibid.; *Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). According to the International Helsinki Federation (IHF), "the Moscow-based independent human rights group Foundation of the Rights of the Mother reported that some 4,000-5,000 draftees in the Russian armed forces died annually in the 1990s, some beaten to death during hazing and others reportedly forced to commit suicide because of degrading and harsh conditions" (IHF 1995, 150). The IHF also claimed that Grachev, in a July 1995 interview with *Izvestia*, agreed that there was a problem but quoted "significantly lower figures" (ibid.).

In the Far East, two soldiers who killed six other soldiers in March 1994 were sentenced to death (AP 22 July 1995; OMRI 24 July 1995b). The two claimed the killings were revenge for the humiliation and torture the others had caused them during *dedovshchina* (ibid.; AP 22 July 1995). (Information on whether the sentence has been executed was unavailable in the sources consulted by the DIRB.)

There are many differing reports on the number of hazing-related deaths each year in the Russian military. Hazing is suspected in the deaths of about 1,250 conscripts in 1994 (*Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). Human Rights Watch reported that according to the human rights group Soldiers' Mothers Committee, 3,000 recruits died as a result of abuse in 1995 (HRW Dec. 1995, 230). Another 423 soldiers committed suicide in 1994, and maltreatment by other soldiers is suspected to have been the cause in many of these cases (*Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995; OMRI 10 July 1995; Reuters 9 July 1995).

Country Reports 1994 notes that increased publicity and the work of human rights groups has helped eliminate *dedovshchina* in individual cases with the help of local commanders, but "without effective leadership training and a viable noncommissioned officer corps, *dedovshchina* can be expected to persist" (*Country Reports 1994 1995*, 936). Human Rights Watch, in its annual world report for 1995 claimed that the Russian government has "made no noticeable attempt ... to end abuse in the army" (HRW Dec. 1995, 228).

3.2 Evasion of Duty and Desertion

3.2.1 Evasion of Duty

A *Washington Post* article claims that:

The phenomenon of draft evasion is not only a reaction to the unpopular war in the Caucasus. It also mirrors the troubles rippling through Russian society nearly four years after the Soviet Union collapsed: contempt for institutions, absence of any motivating national pride or patriotism, rampant bribery and cheating, and, finally, the desperate straits of the Russian armed forces (The Washington Post 13 Oct. 1995).

According to a TASS report, the military claimed that 11,698 potential draftees dodged their military service in 1994 and only 63 of them were made to answer for their actions by authorities (TASS 28 Apr. 1995). Yet, according to two other reports, 22,000 men failed to present themselves to their military commissariats during the fall 1994 call-up campaign (ITAR-TASS 23 June 1995; *Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). According to one of these reports, 1,327 of these men faced criminal proceedings (ITAR-TASS 23 June 1995) and according to the other report, 127 were convicted of evasion (*Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). Col-General Zherebtsov claimed that most draft dodgers escape punishment because the courts are "passive," noting that in 1992-93 only 1.1 per cent of draft dodgers were convicted (*Foreign Report* Mar. 1995, 6). A report in late 1995 claimed that in 1995, 2,170 men refused to perform their military service and that while criminal proceedings were launched against all of them, 1,448 of the cases were dropped for a variety of reasons (Russian Public Television 15 Nov. 1995). Another report claims that there are so many cases of draft dodging that the state does not have the resources to prosecute all of them (*The Washington Post* 13 Oct. 1995).

In June 1995, the Transbaykal Military District's press centre sent an editorial piece to *Krasnaya Zvezda* in which it claimed that fulfilment of the draft quotas is hampered by the number of people ignoring their call-up notices and "the virtual absence of any real possibility of calling 'draft dodgers' to account" (*Krasnaya Zvezda* 3 June 1995).

Also in June 1995, a government draft bill was presented to the Duma that would have increased the penalties for failure to register for military service and for employing a person who has failed to register for military service from 10-20 roubles to 5-10 times the minimum wage (Interfax 9 June 1995). The Duma voted against the draft bill (ibid.).

A January 1996 report in the *St. Petersburg Press* claimed that the Soldiers' Mothers Organization of St. Petersburg has alleged that widespread draft evasion has prompted the Russian military to "grab" teenagers off the streets and induct them into the army (St. Petersburg Press 16-22 January 1996).

3.2.2 Desertion

Reports surfaced of desertion in Chechnya in the months following the invasion (*The Christian Science Monitor* 13 Jan. 1995; ITAR-TASS 9 Feb. 1995). In February 1995, Sergei Sorokin, chair of the Movement Against Violence, claimed that about 3,000 soldiers had deserted their posts since the outbreak of hostilities (ibid.). Sorokin said that these deserters were at home waiting to see what position the military took on their cases, and he claimed that the military procuracy "could either ease the situation or inflict the maximum punishment—seven years imprisonment" (ibid.).

War Resisters International (WRI), a British-based organization, claimed in July 1995 that the situation facing deserters in Chechnya was "quite muddled" as there was still no clear indication of the

numbers of Russian soldiers who had deserted, been killed or were missing (WRI 24 July 1995). WRI also claimed that "apparently there are 20,000 criminal cases pending in the case of [a] whole regiment that refused to go to Chechnya, but no court cases have yet been heard" (ibid.).

A member of the Soldiers' Mothers Committee stated that in January 1995 there was an attempt to bring charges against some men who had deserted, but the effort was "abandoned or possibly postponed" (Peace Media Service 11 July 1995). In another report, the Soldiers' Mothers Committee claimed that in many cases where mothers had secured the release of their sons from serving, the sons have been arrested and charged with "betraying the motherland" (OMRI 7 July 1995). The Soldiers' Mothers Committee also asserted that some 2,000 enlisted men and 500 officers had refused to fight in the Chechen conflict (ibid.).

In April 1995, Amnesty International reported that, according to the Russian Defence Ministry, 567 officers had refused orders to go to Chechnya and that criminal cases had commenced against at least seventeen of these officers (AI Apr. 1995, 20). The Amnesty International report also clearly states that these cases had been opened against officers and not conscripts (ibid.).

In February 1995, ITAR-TASS reported on a group of approximately 40 conscripts serving in the Transbaykal Military District who went AWOL (absent without leave) prior to their units departing for the Chechen conflict (ITAR-TASS 7 Feb. 1995). According to the report criminal proceedings had not been instigated at that time and the conscripts had been assigned to other units in the interim (ibid.).

In March 1995, two Russian servicemen from the Baltic Fleet in Kaliningrad sought political asylum in Lithuania claiming that they were unwilling to go to Chechnya (Lithuanian Radio 30 Mar. 1995; AI Apr. 1995, 19). Russia demanded that Lithuanian authorities extradite the two men without delay (ibid.; Lithuanian Radio 30 Mar. 1995). The Lithuanian government refused to turn the sailors over to the Russians until after they had been allowed to meet with their mothers and with representatives of Russian human rights groups (ibid.). On 4 April 1995, the servicemen were taken to the Russian embassy in Vilnius and were then returned to Kaliningrad (AI Apr. 1995, 20). Information on whether these two men have been charged or what has happened to them could not be found among the sources consulted by the DIRB.

Aida Kukhnina, a spokesperson for the Soldiers' Mothers Committee claimed in a March 1995 report that her organization had documented many cases of captured Russian soldiers being "kept" with Chechen families (RIA 14 Mar. 1995). She expressed concern that these men may eventually be considered deserters by the Russian military (ibid.). Kukhnina also claimed that the Soldier's Mothers Committee had information "about persecution [sic] of such people" (ibid.). Chechen spokespersons also reportedly claimed that some Russian soldiers were staying with or being held by Chechen families and were afraid to return home for fear of prosecution for desertion (Reuters 10 Aug. 1995). A report on Russian television in October 1995 claimed that the military has denied that released Russian prisoners will be prosecuted and that only those who "took their weapons without leave" will face trial (NTV 18 Oct. 1995).

In April 1995, a group of conscripts attempting to desert in Buryatia shot and killed two officers (Reuters 21 Apr. 1995; UPI 21 Apr. 1995). The conscripts were pursued and in a shootout, two of the conscripts and two policemen were killed (ibid.; Reuters 21 Apr. 1995). A Reuters report called the incident "the latest bloody rebellion by servicemen, many of whom are unhappy about poor conditions and widespread brutality in the Russian army" (ibid.; UPI 21 Apr. 1995).

Sergei Yushenkov, chair of the Duma's Defence Committee, reported that in the first five months

of 1995 the military procurator had initiated 82 criminal proceedings against servicemen who refused their orders to go to Chechnya and another 73 charges were laid against servicemen who left their posts while in Chechnya (Interfax 14 June 1995). Deputy military procurator Stanislav Gaveto told Yushenkov that as a result of a proposed amnesty, the servicemen in these cases were being absolved of any criminal liability (ibid.). WRI also noted in July 1995 that "there is some speculation about a general amnesty, but this is only speculation" (WRI 24 July 1995). WRI had no new information on this subject as of October 1995 (ibid. 30 Oct. 1995); however, in December 1995, Human Rights Watch stated that the Defence Ministry "has begun prosecuting scores of men who refused to serve" (HRW Dec. 1995, 230). Further information on whether an amnesty was ever granted could not be found among the sources consulted by the DIRB.

3.3 Deferments of Service

A report in *The Times* in January 1995 noted that "the conscription system has collapsed, with the majority of the potential troops finding ways to exempt themselves from service" (*The Times* 23 Jan. 1995). Seventy-seven per cent of draft-age males received deferments in 1994 (TASS 28 Apr. 1995; *Moskovskaya Pravda* 27 Sept. 1995; *Rabochaya Tribuna* 29 Apr. 1995). In 1989 that figure had been 57 per cent (ibid.; TASS 28 Apr. 1995). Draftees deemed medically unfit for service numbered 29.3 per cent in 1994 (ibid.). Despite the high percentage of deferments, the military claimed that, the 1994 recruitment quota had been fulfilled (ibid.). Another source claims that 84 per cent of eligible men avoided military service in 1994 due to an increase in the number of valid reasons for deferment (*Financial Times* 4 Feb. 1995). Information on the number of valid reasons for deferment is contradictory. One source claims that there were 21 exemptions from the draft in the spring of 1995, which resulted in only 23 per cent of the eligible 1.5 million draft-age men actually being drafted (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 29 Apr. 1995). Another source puts the number of deferment categories at twenty (ITAR-TASS 29 Sept. 1995), while others claim that there are more than twenty (*Krasnaya Zvezda* 10 Oct. 1995; *Moskovskiye Novosti* 1-8 Oct. 1995). Some sources also claim that a number of deferments have been abolished (ibid. 24 Sept.-1 Oct. 1995; *Krasnaya Zvezda* 10 Oct. 1995). However, according to Col-General Zherebtsov, head of the General Headquarters Mobilization Department, the spring 1995 draft quota was 100 per cent fulfilled at 209,000 men (Interfax 11 July 1995).

According to a *Washington Post* report it is often possible to avoid military service by bribing corrupt officials in the military commissariats for a medical certificate for deferment or exemption (*The Washington Post* 13 Oct. 1995). The same report claims that a soldier's mother stated that about \$5,000 could possibly secure such a deferment (ibid.). At a grassroots level, women are reportedly selling copies of the military code which details the regulations on the draft in the Moscow metro stations (ibid.). According to one report, one can easily purchase a copy of the military's list of all acceptable medical conditions for deferment for less than \$2 (ibid.). The Soldiers' Mothers Committee claims that local commissariats often lose or refuse to attach important documents to a conscript's application for deferment so they can extort a bribe from the young man's parents (ibid.).

According to a report in the *St. Petersburg Press*, the Soldiers' Mothers Organization, a human rights group that "fights to defend human rights in the Russian armed forces" has charged that the military has been ignoring "legal documents excusing potential conscripts from military service" and has even inducted a man with only one lung and another with only one kidney (*St. Petersburg Press* 16-22 January 1996). Corroboration of this report was unavailable at the time of writing.

3.4 Alternative Service

3.4.1 Alternative Civilian Service

The constitution provides for alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors (Peace Media Service 5 Aug. 1995; AI 1995, 247). However, the Duma has failed to pass enabling legislation for this constitutional provision (ibid.; Interfax 20 Nov. 1995). The alternative civilian service issue has been challenged in the courts: on 14 April 1994 Pavel Zverev, a religious pacifist, sued the conscription board for refusing to provide him with alternative civilian service (AI 1995, 247). The Moscow city court ruled in Zverev's favour. It is believed to be the first time a draftee was successful in this type of legal action (ibid.). A 1994 report in the Russian paper *Golos* urged people who were called-up after declaring their inability to serve for religious or other convictions, to appeal to the court for their right to alternative civilian service as per Article 59 of the constitution and if they were unsuccessful to appeal all the way to the Constitutional Court (Golos 1994).

Amnesty International stated in its 1995 report that conscientious objectors were prosecuted in Russia in 1994 but, at that time, it was unaware of anyone actually being imprisoned (AI 1995, 24). Amnesty International also cited the example of Oleg Khmelnitsky, a Jehovah's Witness, who was acquitted by a Moscow court in May 1994 (ibid.). In this case, the judge gave precedence to the constitution over the criminal code (ibid.). However, another Jehovah's Witness, Lev Sobolyev, in accordance with Article 80 of the Russian Criminal Code, was reportedly sentenced to one year in prison for refusing his military service (ibid., Apr. 1995, 18). Sobolyev had also been sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment following his refusal to register for conscription in 1992. This sentence was lifted in a May 1994 amnesty, following which Sobolyev again refused to submit to the draft board; in November 1994 he was sentenced again and sent to a corrective labour colony (ibid.). It is unclear whether Sobolyev is still imprisoned.

In August 1995, Nikolai Gorshkov petitioned the Moscow court to allow him to do alternative civilian service on religious grounds (Peace Media Service 5 Aug. 1995; *Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). He cited Article 59 of the constitution, which provides for the right to alternative civilian service, but the court rejected his bid and he could face criminal charges for evasion of duty (ibid.; Peace Media Service 5 Aug. 1995). Gorshkov's case started in 1992 when he first received call-up papers. At that time he had been excused for medical reasons—poor eyesight (ibid.). When he was again called up in the spring of 1995 he declared himself a conscientious objector. The military commissariat offered to let him do alternative military service (see following section) in a construction brigade (ibid.; *Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). These units are reportedly "the roughest, least disciplined, and most notorious units in the military" (ibid.). At this point Gorshkov contacted Sergei Sorokin of the Movement Against Violence and petitioned the courts to allow him to do alternative civilian service (Peace Media Service 5 Aug. 1995). During the court proceedings, the military commissariat argued that in the absence of enabling legislation to allow alternative civilian service, such service is not possible (ibid.).

According to an August 1995 report Sergei Sorokin reportedly stated that the military is unwilling to initiate proceedings against conscientious objectors (*Christian Science Monitor* 8 Aug. 1995). According to Sorokin, while only seven of the thirty men he has assisted with their petitions to be excused from military service had them accepted by the courts, the army has neither prosecuted nor drafted any of the others (ibid.). In another interview, Sorokin reportedly stated that there is no consensus within the Russian court system on whether conscientious objectors should face criminal prosecution (Peace Media Service 11 July 1995). Sorokin pointed out that the first case he had been involved with, that of his son, was started in 1992 and is still waiting for a final verdict (ibid.).

3.4.2 Alternative Military Service

According to a report in OMRI, as part of the fall 1995 call-up campaign, the military has proposed an alternative military service in construction and railroad crews for those who are opposed to military service (OMRI 29 Sept. 1995). Col-General Zherebtsov, chief of the Main Organization and Mobilization Department, advocates a four-year term for such alternative service (ibid.). An intern at OMRI noted that these construction brigades and railroad crews are often staffed with conscripts with criminal records, which adds to their notorious reputation (Dmitriev 6 Nov. 1995).

4. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

According to one report, "all indications suggest that the rate of decline [in the military] has actually accelerated in recent years and that a 'bottoming out' of Russian military power is not yet in sight" (*Current History* Oct. 1995, 328). A report in May 1995 states that "the Russian state is weak and it remains to be seen whether it can persecute [sic] war deserters effectively" (*Newsday* 7 May 1995). Another source suggests that the increased length of service will also increase the number of desertions (*Segodnya* 4 May 1995).

A Human Rights seminar held in the far eastern city of Magadan in September-October 1995 noted that there has been a shift in the human rights issues in Russia in recent years away from freedom of speech and political rights towards specific groups, including army conscripts (OMRI 28 Sept. 1995). The Russian population has responded to the problems of army conscripts, especially through the Soldiers' Mothers Committee, but also through a new organization called the Movement of Soldiers' Fathers (ITAR-TASS 12 May 1995). The group reportedly grew out of many cases of fathers accompanying their sons when the sons were sent to Chechnya and staying with them and even being put on the "subsistence allowance list" there (ibid.). Another new group called the Antimilitary Radical Association was founded in May 1995 and advocates mass conscientious objection to military service (Peace Media Service 11 July 1995).

The military nominated roughly 120 candidates to run in the 17 December 1995 parliamentary elections, apparently because of its perception that the Duma was not adequately supporting the needs of the military (OMRI 26 Sept. 1995; ibid. 19 Oct. 1995). Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin announced on 17 November 1995, one month before the December elections, that the government would give the military its overdue budget allocations and Grachev responded by promising to "urge service personnel to vote for the prime minister's [Our Home is Russia] party" (OMRI 20 Nov. 1995). Information on whether these efforts translated into actual votes for Our Home is Russia is not available to the DIRB, however, the party did win 55 seats in the elections placing second to the Communist Party's 157 seats (OMRI 2 Jan. 1996).

NOTES ON SELECTED SOURCES

Russian Media Sources:

There are many newspapers operating in Russia today. Some have been in operation for a number of years, state-controlled at first by various organs of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union they now operate independently of the state; these include *Moskovskaya Pravda* and *Rabochaya Tribuna*. Some other independent newspapers have been in operation for only a few years, such as *Segodnya*. *Rossiskaya Gazeta* is the organ of the Russian government and *Krasnaya Zvezda* is the organ of the Ministry of Defence. *Moscow News* is a weekly which has been published since 1930. It is independent and is published in both Russian and English.

ITAR-TASS and Interfax are Russian news agencies. ITAR-TASS, founded in 1925, is state owned, while Interfax, founded in 1989, is independent.

OMRI Daily Digest and Transition:

The *OMRI Daily Digest* is published electronically by the Open Media Research Institute (OMRI). Citations listed as having been received via an internet mailing list were received via the electronic listserver at LISTSERV@UBVM.CC.BUFFALO.EDU. OMRI is a joint initiative of the United States Board for International Broadcasting, the US oversight agency of Radio Free EuropeRadio Liberty (RFERL), and the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute. OMRI now fulfills many of the research needs previously addressed by the RFERL Research Institute. *Transition* is a monthly journal published by OMRI. Both *Transition* and the *OMRI Daily Digest* commenced publication in January 1995.

The International Helsinki Federation For Human Rights (IHF) is a Vienna-based, non-profit NGO that monitors compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and its Follow-up documents as well as their reference to international law. It represents 30 Helsinki Committees in Europe and North America.

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