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The Kremlin's Narrative on Mobilization: Frighten, Bargain, and, if that Fails, Declare It

How the Kremlin brandishes mobilization in the resuming talks while quietly preparing for it

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The apparent leak campaign about a possible mobilization after the State Duma elections, aimed at Western audiences, functions as the Kremlin's escalatory argument within the negotiations now resuming under Washington's mediation.

Yet the narrowing flow of contract soldiers and the accelerated legal groundwork for the mobilization infrastructure indicate that for the Kremlin this is not only a rhetorical threat but also one of the clear priority scenarios for the post-election period, when public sentiment will no longer weigh so heavily on Kremlin tactics.

Key topics:

1. An Apparent Campaign of Controlled Leaks About Mobilization Plans
2. Public Anxiety, the Response of Official Propaganda, and the Reaction of the Z-Community
3. Recruitment Into the Russian Armed Forces: Current State and Constraints
4. Optimization of the Mobilization Infrastructure

Executive Summary

The wave of leaks about a possible mobilization after the September State Duma elections, which emerged at the turn of July and August, on the totality of the indicators looks like a Kremlin-orchestrated campaign addressed not to Russian society but to the U.S. administration.

Its task is, at a minimum, to make public the price of failing to meet Moscow's conditions in the talks now resuming. Judging by the chronology, the trigger was Secretary of State Marco Rubio's statement of July 31 about attempts to restart negotiations, made against the backdrop of the acknowledged failure of the Anchorage agreements.

As early as August 2, the Wall Street Journal wrote about a possible mobilization after the parliamentary elections, and on August 10 the Financial Times, citing "people familiar with the matter," gave an annual target of 409,000 new recruits.

> By contrast, earlier Western media coverage of the same subject had drawn on expert analysis and on Russian journalists in exile rather than on insider information from within the system.

The key comment in the FT piece ("Putin may have no other choice than to call a mobilization") belongs to Ruslan Pukhov, whom the Kremlin uses to convey more critical narratives about the Russian army while positioning him as an insider.

He heads the Moscow-based Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, has sat on the Public Council of the Ministry of Defense since 2007 and is a recipient of departmental awards, and previously worked at Rosoboronexport and at the joint-stock company Defense Systems.

A parallel signal is being sent through the insider channel VChK-OGPU, which mentioned mobilization only twice in all of 2026, both times within the past two weeks: cautiously

on July 29, in connection with the tightening of criteria for mobilization deferments at the shipbuilding enterprises overseen by former Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev, and then directly on August 8 ("There is an instruction to gather 800,000 people for the Special Military Operation (SMO) by the end of the year"), three hours before the TASS report on a possible visit by Witkoff and Kushner to Moscow.

Domestically, the picture is the mirror image. Demand for peace is holding at a record 62% (Levada Center, July), and the share of those who believe the war is going successfully has fallen by 19 p.p. in a single month, from 69 to 50% (Levada Center). The Kremlin-run Public Opinion Foundation (FOM), which in its survey covering July 27–August 2 was still burying "rumors about mobilization" within the category "Other events in Russia," on August 14 broke out "possible mobilization" as a separate category of the week's events in its polling.

For July and the first ten days of August, at least eight denials by members of the top elite can be counted, the central one being Dmitry Medvedev's statement of July 28 about the enemy's "nonsense" and "mendacious provocation" on the eve of the elections, even as Nezygar, a channel linked to the Presidential Administration, immediately qualified that "Medvedev is not the person who handles mobilization" and that his words amounted to "pure propaganda tasking."

The behavior of the Z-community is more telling still. Mobilization, previously the sharpest of topics, has all but vanished from its internal agenda: Z-channels simply copy official narratives to the effect that no mobilization is planned, and on August 13 Roman Alekhin, who for months had demanded honest communication about mobilization, and the channel Condottiero, which had promoted the idea of imminent mobilization musters, simultaneously disavowed their own recent posts.

> Against the backdrop of other war correspondents' silence, the detentions of Z-authors in July, and the three-year sentence handed down to the author of the channel Voevoda Broadcasts, this reads as a Kremlin-imposed block on discussion of the topic under threat of repression.

The figures for current recruitment into the Russian armed forces are the main argument that mobilization is possible. In the first half of 2026, according to analysts' data, roughly 172,000 contracts were signed (79,000 in Q1 and 93,000 in Q2), 10% fewer than a year earlier, whereas Medvedev claimed 200,000 on July 28.

For the Unmanned Systems Forces of Russia, the discrepancy is sharper still: 40,000 according to Medvedev against "more than 8,000 specialists" according to Deputy Defense Minister Alexei Krivoruchko, a figure that amounts to about 10% of the annual target of 78,800 given in leaked Ministry of Defense documents.

The average one-time regional payment for signing a contract has reached 2.98 million rubles (approximately $36,200), and the number of regions paying bounties to recruiters has grown from 31 in October 2025 to 56 by August 2026.

> Cases of coerced mobilization are also multiplying, from round-ups in Penza to detentions and forced contract signings in Omsk and Ulyanovsk.

Legal preparation and the refinement of the mobilization infrastructure, meanwhile, are moving faster than the rhetoric: the abolition of mandatory medical examination during periods of mobilization and martial law, Rosgvardia's amendments to the Regulation on Civil Defense, the law permitting contracts for those convicted of banditry and narcotics smuggling, which entered into force on August 4 (the prison population has fallen by 183,000 since the start of the war, in part through the recruitment of convicts), and the growing number of mobilization assignment orders being issued.

> Putin increased the authorized strength of the Armed Forces three times in 2026, as many times as in the first four years of the war.

Channels that are not taking part in the campaign to intimidate the West are describing the parameters of a possible future mobilization. On August 6 Nezygar wrote outright that mobilization will be covert and will not be announced, with the authorities confining themselves to an addendum to the 2022 decree and a focus on reservists.

On August 8 Two Majors, a Z-channel close to the security bloc, went further and proposed a narrative cover for it: the "fair rotation" of those mobilized in 2022, a formula that will also be understood to mean replacing the dead with new recruits.

> This frame, to all appearances, is one of the priority scenarios.

An Apparent Campaign of Controlled Leaks About Mobilization Plans

Since the turn of July and August, leaks about the possibility of mobilization after the September parliamentary elections have been multiplying, and on a number of indicators the pattern resembles a Kremlin-orchestrated campaign representing yet another attempt to convince the U.S. administration that if Moscow's conditions in the talks now resuming are not met, escalation on the front in Ukraine is inevitable.

Yet the campaign is tactically advantageous to Moscow and is designed at a minimum to signal loudly and publicly that the Kremlin is giving the West what it presents as a final warning before a possible "forced" escalation.

> None of this negates the fact that mobilization is regarded within the Kremlin as one of the priority scenarios for the post-election period.

Over the past two weeks, at least two notable instances of "insider" information being published for Western audiences can be traced: (1) the Wall Street Journal piece of August 2, "The Kremlin Is Bullying More Russians Into Fighting in Ukraine," citing data from unnamed U.S. officials about a possible mobilization after the Russian parliamentary elections; (2) the Financial Times article of August 10, "Putin's war machine scours the home front for recruits," which reports a target of 409,000 new recruits for this year, citing "people familiar with the matter."

> It is notable that earlier material in major Western media[3] on the subject of mobilization tended to rest on expert analysis or to cite Russian journalists in exile rather than on insider information from within the system.

The key context for the pieces mentioned is the July 31 statement by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio:

> "You gonna see some efforts of the next few weeks to see if we can restart talks between the two sides and bring this war to an end"[4],

which for the first time signaled the possibility of resuming negotiations against the backdrop of the acknowledged "failure of the Anchorage agreements"[5].

> This was most likely the trigger for the start of active promotion of the narrative about a coming mobilization.

In addition, the FT article contains a comment from Ruslan Pukhov:

> "Putin may have no other choice than to call a mobilization."

Pukhov is the Moscow-based director of the Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies and is directly connected to the Ministry of Defense (he has served on the ministry's Public Council since 2007 and receives departmental awards[6]), as well as a member of the key Kremlin foreign policy think tanks (the Russian International Affairs Council and the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy).

As the independent outlet The Bell has observed[7], Pukhov "regularly gives Western media critical comments about the Russian army and even the president," playing the media role of an ostensibly independent expert "from Moscow" oriented

toward Western audiences. He does not even have a Russian-language Wikipedia page, for instance, whereas the English-language entry is set out in considerable detail[8].

According to EK Stratcom sources, he previously worked within structures of the Russian military-industrial complex: at Rosoboronexport, the state company for the import and export of all types of armaments, and at the joint-stock company Defense Systems, which develops and produces air defense systems.

Taken together, these facts indicate that Pukhov effectively serves as a conduit to the West for narratives about the military-industrial complex and the Russian army that are advantageous to Moscow, and even his critical observations are evidently coordinated with the Kremlin, as is his narrative

> "Putin may have no other choice than to call a mobilization" in the FT piece.

The shift in the Z-channels connected to the Russian security bloc is a further indirect indication of the campaign. The overwhelming majority of the Z-community promotes the narratives of official propaganda to the domestic audience, to the effect that there will be no mobilization.

One exception is the insider channel VChK-OGPU, which is used among other things to send signals to Western stakeholders: across all of 2026 it mentions mobilization only twice, and both times within the past two weeks.

The first post[9] appeared on July 29 and dealt with the tightening of criteria for mobilization deferments for employees of the enterprises of the United Shipbuilding Corporation, which is overseen by former Security Council secretary Nikolai Patrushev. The channel did not then risk stating

outright that mobilization was being planned, confining itself to the formulation:

> "Against the background of the growing volume of information about a possible mobilization after the State Duma elections, this looks extremely alarming."

On August 8, VChK-OGPU abandoned its earlier caution and reported directly:

> "There is an instruction to gather 800,000 people for the Special Military Operation by the end of the year"[10].

The post was published just three hours before the TASS report on the forthcoming visit of Witkoff and Kushner to Moscow[11], which domestic propaganda then presented as the key storyline of the foreign policy agenda.

> To all appearances, resources connected to the security bloc and the Kremlin are thus signaling the price of a potential failure in the talks, threatening escalation and a prolongation of the conflict in the event of a substantial increase in the Russian force alongside the manning problems of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Public Anxiety, the Response of Official Propaganda, and the Reaction of the Z-Community

Mobilization is one of the principal fears in Russian society today. Record war fatigue coexists with the increasingly obvious cost of the war to citizens: the fuel crisis caused by systematic strikes on oil and gas facilities, the mounting problems of small business caused by attacks on the warehouse hubs of online marketplaces, and the tightening policies of the authorities.

All of this comes against a sustained, record-high demand for peace (62% in July, according to the independent Levada Center[12]). **Awareness of the deadlock in the SMO is also growing:** from June to July, the share of those who believe the war is going successfully fell by 19 p.p., from 69 to 50%[13] (Levada Center).

The insider Telegram channel Nezygar, linked to the Presidential Administration, asserts in this connection that "what most worries Russian business and officials is whether there will be a mobilization and a transition to a mobilization model of the economy"[14], and that "the majority of Russians still oppose a new wave of mobilization. At the same time, the number of people who consider it inevitable is gradually growing: at present, around 15–20% of citizens share this view. Direct support for coercive mobilization, however, is expressed by a significantly smaller part of society"[15].

The absence of public polling specifically on the subject of mobilization is partly offset by indirect signs of public anxiety. "Rumors about mobilization" were mentioned within the category "Other events in Russia" in the survey of the week's events for July 27–August 2 by the Kremlin-run Public Opinion Foundation (FOM)[16], while in its latest survey of August 14[17] the FOM singled out "possible mobilization" as a separate, important

category of events. **In parallel,** human rights defenders are recording[18] a surge in inquiries about how to avoid a new wave of mobilization.

During the current State Duma election campaign, rumors about mobilization, which fuel anxiety and distrust of the authorities, are one of the key problems for the Kremlin's political managers. For this reason, officials of various ranks appear regularly across the Russian propaganda space (at least eight statements by members of the top elite can be counted for July and the first ten days of August) to state that "no mobilization is planned" and that the rumors themselves are an information operation by Ukrainian intelligence, the West, and foreign agents.

The central statement was the July 28 remark by Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev:

> "The enemy's attempts to peddle all sorts of nonsense about mobilization being prepared in the country are nothing more than a mendacious provocation. This is part of the propaganda ahead of the elections. They are trying, naturally, to destabilize the situation <...> I will emphasize specifically: there is no need whatsoever for mobilization. This is a lie from an enemy that is itself experiencing a shortage of human resources; there is no one left to fight there"[19].

The insider channel Nezygar, however, stated that

> "Medvedev is not the person who handles mobilization or makes the decision. Mobilization depends solely on Putin and Gerasimov <...> Therefore Medvedev's words are pure propaganda tasking"[20].

Medvedev's words were actively disseminated by Russian propaganda, which pushed them into the key topics of Sunday television news broadcasts[21,22] and onto other resources, including Z-Telegram[23].

The Kremlin's key propagandist Vladimir Solovyov, for instance, delivered a monologue to the effect that "there will be no mobilization, but the country needs to prepare for further escalation"[24], and shortly before that he had declared that "you cannot simply call everyone up all at once. Who is spreading these idiotic narratives without even being capable of calculating how complicated all this is?"[25], apparently forgetting the experience of the partial mobilization of 2022.

Propaganda is meanwhile working through other channels. The Expert Institute for Social Research (EISI), the personal think tank[26] of Sergei Kiriyenko, first deputy head of the Presidential Administration, released material accusing Kyiv of fakes about covert mobilization in Russia: "Ukraine is incapable of defeating Russia on the battlefield, and therefore it is making enormous efforts to win on the information [field]"[27]. The same line was promoted by the War on Fakes channel[28].

The well-known Kremlin-aligned political analyst Yevgeny Minchenko likewise asserts[29] that "there are no rational reasons for mobilization at this point. All the military specialists I talk to say so," and repeats Solovyov's narratives about the complexity and duration of the procedure itself.

In recent days the propaganda approach has been somewhat adjusted, as it has begun fending off specific storylines. On August 13, for example, the Kremlin-controlled outlet Lenta.ru wrote[30] about the spread of a new fake about mobilization in Russia, namely that military commissariat officials across the country had been barred from taking leave after August 20. Notable in the piece is the choice of source[31] for this supposed fake: the pro-war Z-channel Condottiero, which is associated with an unnamed veteran of the Wagner private military company.

In this context, a radical shift in the rhetoric of Z-channels regarding mobilization can be observed. Whereas the subject of mobilization was previously one of the central topics in internal discussion within the pro-war Z-community, as EK Stratcom has surveyed in detail[32], the topic has now all but left the war

correspondents' independent agenda despite its acuteness for Russian citizens.

Almost all major Z-channels are promoting in unison the narrative that there will be no mobilization, engaging in the mass distribution of statements by Russian officials without adding interpretations of their own. This is being done, for instance, by MIG of Russia[33,34], Readovka[35], and Two Majors[36], all linked to the security bloc; by the war correspondents Boris Rozhin[37] and Vladimir Romanov[38]; and by the Z-blogger Yulia Vityazeva[39] and the channel Operation Z: War Correspondents of the Russian Spring[40].

A further indicator of this shift among the war correspondents has been the trajectory of posts by the pro-war Roman Alekhin, designated a foreign agent for criticizing the authorities, and by the aforementioned Condottiero, the Z-channel associated with a Wagner PMC veteran.

Alekhin had consistently published material almost daily[41,42,43,44] about the need for honest communication on mobilization[45], warning the authorities that "a mobilization of the kind we had last time is not needed, and it would undermine the state in a way the enemy could not"[46], while Condottiero had actively promoted[47,48] the idea that mobilization musters were imminent and that the military commissariats were preparing for them[49].

On August 13, however, both bloggers suddenly came out disavowing their own earlier posts: **Alekhin wrote**[50] **that** "by all appearances, there will be no mobilization after all. Or else everything is entirely illogical," **while Condottiero put out an ironic post** mocking Zelensky's warnings about mobilization: "The chief spokesman for 'Mobilization in Russia after the elections' is Zelensky. That is all you need to know about a sudden mobilization"[51].

Such illogical behavior by these war correspondents directly contradicts their own very recent statements. Set against

the disappearance of a previously popular topic from internal discussion in the Z-community, this points to one thing:

> the Kremlin has imposed a block on discussion of mobilization so as not to fuel public panic, since the principal audience of these channels consists of the 46% of Russians who follow the course of the war (Levada Center[52]).

The backdrop to this is a campaign of increased Kremlin pressure and repression against certain Z-bloggers. In a single week of July alone, three figures were detained[53]: the former Z-author Ilya Remeslo, who has been critical of the authorities since March of this year, the Z-author Georgy Zakrevsky[54], and the blogger Egor Guzenko[55].

In the same week, Alexei Zemtsov, a military pilot and the author of the channel Voevoda Broadcasts[56], was sentenced to three years in a penal colony.

> The Kremlin is thereby signaling to other Z-authors to be more careful and to follow its information policy.

Recruitment Into the Russian Armed Forces: Current State and Constraints

The Russian army continues to face problems recruiting new personnel: the flow of new recruits to reinforce the Russian force in Ukraine, which Putin recently put at 700,000[57], is progressively narrowing. The commercial contract model, to which the Kremlin switched immediately after the partial mobilization of autumn 2022, is slowly outliving itself.

The switch came in response to the consequences of that mobilization: falling ratings, the mass departure of men of mobilization age, and the difficulties of administering mobilization measures.

According to estimates by independent experts[58], roughly 172,000 new contracts were signed in the first half of 2026 (79,000 in Q1 and 93,000 in Q2), 10% below the first half of 2025, while according to the latest estimate by independent Russian journalists[59] the pace of recruitment is lower still: 71,200 new contracts in Q1, 20% fewer than in Q1 2025.

These figures differ markedly from the 200,000 new contracts for the first half of 2026 announced[60] on July 28 by Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev and repeated by propaganda outlets[61].

A gap also emerges when they are set against statements by Ministry of Defense representatives: on July 17, Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov stated that "more than 140,000 people"[62] had completed training at ranges this year, a figure that also covers the mandatory training[63,64] of new recruits before dispatch to the combat zone. That is 60,000 lower than the number Medvedev announced.

According to preliminary data, the campaign to recruit students into the Unmanned Systems Forces has proved ineffective.

While Medvedev claimed[65] on July 28 that they had been reinforced by 40,000 people in the first half of 2026, Deputy Defense Minister Alexei Krivoruchko had told a session of the Ministry of Defense collegium earlier, on July 17, that "more than 8,000 specialists"[66] had been trained over the same period.

Given that Medvedev is a largely symbolic figure who regularly voices the most hawkish propaganda positions, it is plausible that Krivoruchko's 8,000 is far closer to reality. If that figure is taken as the baseline, only 10% of the 2026 plan has been met: according to leaked Ministry of Defense documents[67], the annual target is 78,800 new recruits for the Unmanned Systems Forces, of whom 58,000 are to be recruited from students, graduates of drone piloting courses, former servicemen of aviation units, and "female citizens."

The continuing growth of one-time regional payments for signing a contract also points to the difficulties of recruitment. Regions are in effect competing with one another to meet the Kremlin's KPIs for attracting new recruits, drawing them in with high payments (on average 2.98 million rubles[68], approximately $36,200).

In the first ten days of August alone, for example, payments were raised in Primorsky and Kamchatka krais and in Kaliningrad and Tver regions. In addition, the program of rewards for recruiters[69] who persuade men to sign a contract has been expanded.

The number of regions offering these payments has grown from 31 in October 2025 to 56 by August 2026, and the recruiter rewards themselves have risen, now averaging around $3,650, with a spread from $120 to $12,200 per recruit depending on the region.

In parallel, cases of coerced mobilization are becoming more numerous. The June round-up campaign targeting men in Penza resumed in the second half of July, and in one of the region's villages this led to the creation of a self-organized citizens' patrol resisting recruiters[70]. Men from Ulyanovsk and Omsk were also reportedly sent to the war by force in June and July[71].

Optimization of the Mobilization Infrastructure

In July 2026, the Russian authorities moved forward with a series of measures refining the mechanisms of mobilization, a development that may indicate legal preparation for a new mobilization campaign.

On July 3, the Ministry of Defense published[72] a draft bill under which medical examination for contract soldiers and mobilized personnel would cease to be mandatory "during periods of mobilization, martial law, and wartime." Formally, this would make it possible to shorten the time required for mobilization procedures and to deliver recruits to the combat zone faster, as well as to reduce the number of new recruits screened out on medical grounds.

On July 20, Rosgvardia submitted for consultation[73] draft amendments to the Regulation on Civil Defense under which it would be required to "prepare in advance the servicemen, staff, facilities, and property of the agency for protection against the dangers arising during a period of mobilization, martial law, and wartime."

> The intent behind these powers is evidently a scenario of escalation.

While the foregoing measures are still at the consultation stage, the bill introduced on July 17 was rapidly adopted and entered into force on August 4[74]. The law lifted the ban on the conclusion of a military contract by those convicted of banditry, participation in an organized criminal group, narcotics smuggling, and other criminal offenses, opening the way to expanded recruitment in Russian prisons.

Since the start of the war, the prison population in Russia has fallen by 183,000 people, a decline that, in the words of Federal

Penitentiary Service head Arkady Gostev, is "also influenced by the work of selecting contract soldiers for the Armed Forces"[75].

In addition, independent Russian journalists noted[76] that over the course of July three trade publications aimed at accountants, HR specialists, and company managers ran overviews of how to keep military registration records during mobilization, even though no legislative changes had occurred in this area.

> All the measures listed above are a clear continuation of the optimization of the mobilization infrastructure that began back in 2022, and now of year-round conscription as well.

Electronic registers and digital systems for tracking men have been introduced, with automatic restriction of civil rights, including the right to leave the country, in the event that a summons to the military commissariat is issued or not answered.

Part of the responsibility for carrying out mobilization has also been shifted onto employers, with penalties for failure to discharge these duties tightened[77].

Since the end of last year, the Kremlin has begun actively recruiting the mobilization manpower reserve, which formally sits outside the authorized strength of the Russian Armed Forces[78]. That strength was increased by Putin three times over 2026[79], from 2.389 million at the start of the year to 2.426 million as of August 14.

It is notable that these adjustments have become quite frequent: over the first four years of the war (2022–2025), by comparison, the size of the Russian army was increased on only three occasions, and cumulatively the authorized strength has grown by 523,000 people to date.

The "mobilization manpower reserve" referred to consists of civilians in the reserve who have signed a voluntary contract with the Ministry of Defense to remain there. Under legislative

amendments of October 2025[80], they are periodically sent to "special assemblies," during which they acquire the status of servicemen and are incorporated into mobile fire groups or into the territorial detachments of the Combat Army Reserve of the Country (BARS).

Under Putin's decree of December 2025, these formations are tasked with "ensuring the protection of critically important facilities and other life-support facilities"[81].

Reserve status, a lighter version of a Ministry of Defense contract, is aimed first and foremost at reinforcing the rear, but in the event of a new wave of mobilization, reservists become among the first in the mobilization queue.

For these reasons, joining the reserve is not especially popular: despite aggressive advertising[82,83,84] carrying notes about "service exclusively within the territory of the region" to allay potential reservists' fears of being sent to the front in Ukraine, the first known intakes are on the order of a hundred reservists per region (Oryol, 83 people, June 2026[85]; Chelyabinsk, 100 people, July 2026[86]).

A far larger figure has circulated: in 2023, State Duma Defense Committee Chairman Andrei Kartapolov stated that the "mobilization manpower reserve" numbered around two million people[87], though the number has no other confirmation and is regularly questioned even by pro-government media[88]. By October 2025, Kartapolov's own estimate had fallen to 30,000 reservists[89], a figure of an order consistent with the regional intakes described above.

In addition, in 2026 Russians began receiving mobilization assignment orders more frequently[90]. Such an order is an open-ended document issued to citizens liable for military service that obliges them to report by a set deadline to a specified muster point during mobilization, without waiting for a separate summons. Ignoring the document after mobilization has been declared may be treated as evasion of mobilization, which carries criminal liability and a sentence of up to two years' imprisonment.

> All the indications described above are also consistent with a number of rare reports based on sources and with data from insider Telegram channels, none of which, in EK Stratcom's assessment, are taking part in the campaign to intimidate the West.

As early as June 24, the Russian opposition outlet Verstka wrote[91] about "rumors and possible preparation for mobilization," emphasizing that "the decision on this question has not been taken" (accurate as of the end of June) and citing "8 sources working with the Presidential Administration, as well as interlocutors in the military commissariats and a source close to the FSB."

In parallel, the channel Belorusskiy silovik (Belarusian Security Officer), which is close to the security bloc, wrote on July 28[92] about the possibility of mobilization, **while another insider channel, Nezygar**, linked to the Presidential Administration, stated on July 23, citing sources in the Security Council[93], that "expectations of a new wave of mobilization have no basis."

The same post, however, emphasized that

> "the available stock of first-category reservists, around 2 million people who have signed contracts with the Ministry of Defense [this figure appears to be taken from Kartapolov's statement above], is entirely sufficient for the further conduct of the SMO,"

thereby hinting at an intensification of covert mobilization rather than the declaration of a new wave.

On August 6, Nezygar wrote explicitly[94] that mobilization will be covert and that "the authorities will not announce it," referring to the standing 2022 decree on partial mobilization,

to which an addendum will simply be added, with the focus to remain on reservists:

> "mobilization (if there is one) will be smoothly built into the everyday life of society,"

the channel concludes.

The Telegram channel Two Majors, which is close to the security bloc, on August 8 in effect set out a possible narrative for the domestic audience justifying a covert mobilization campaign:

> "It would be fair to rotate out those who left under mobilization in 2022"[95].

> If this logic is adopted, it will serve as the narrative cover for coercive recruitment into the army and for an increase in the Russian force in Ukraine, since by rotation the Kremlin would in practice also mean replacing the dead among those mobilized since 2022 with new and still living recruits.

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