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Putin orders Russian military to beef up forces by 137,000

Yesterday 10:46 a.m.



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MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday ordered the Russian military to increase the number of troops by 137,000 to a total of 1.15 million amid Moscow's military action in Ukraine.





— Putin orders Russian military to beef up forces by 137,000

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Putin's decree, which takes effect on Jan. 1, didn't specify whether the military will beef up its ranks by drafting a bigger number of conscripts, increasing the number of volunteer soldiers or using a combination of both. But some Russian military analysts predicted it would rely heavily on volunteers, a cautious stand reflecting the Kremlin's concerns about a possible fallout from an attempt to increase the draft.

The presidential decree will boost the overall number of Russian military personnel to 2,039,758, including 1,150,628 troops. A previous order put the military's numbers at 1,902,758 and 1,013,628 respectively at the start of 2018.

The Kremlin has said that only volunteer contract soldiers take part in what it calls the "special military operation" in Ukraine, rejecting claims that it was pondering a mobilization.

Russian media and non-governmental organizations say Russian authorities have sought to bolster the number of troops involved in the military action in Ukraine by attracting more



volunteers, engaging private military contractors and even offering amnesty to some prisoners in exchange for a tour of military duty.

Regional authorities have also tried to help beef up the ranks, forming volunteer battalions to be deployed to Ukraine.

Related video: Putin boasts of Russian weapons prowess



All Russian men aged 18-27 must serve one year in the military, but a large share avoid the draft for health reasons or deferments granted to university students. The share of men who avoid the draft is particularly big in Moscow and other major cities.



The Russian military rounds up draftees twice a year, starting April 1 and Oct. 1. Putin ordered the drafting of 134,500 conscripts during the latest spring draft earlier this year and 127,500 last fall.

In recent years, the Kremlin has emphasized increasing the share of volunteer contract soldiers as it sought to modernize the army and improve its capability. Before the Kremlin sent troops to Ukraine on Feb. 24, the Russian milit



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400,000 contract soldiers, including about 147,000 in the ground forces. The number of conscripts

has been estimated at around 270,000, and officers and non-commissioned officers have accounted for the rest.

Military analysts say if the campaign in Ukraine drags on, those numbers could be clearly insufficient to sustain the operations in Ukraine, which has declared a goal of forming a 1-million-strong military.

But many observers have warned that a broad mobilization or a sweeping increase in the number of draftees could fuel public discontent and destabilize the political situation in Russia. That happened during the separatist wars in Chechnya in the 1990s and the early 2000s, when poorly trained Russian conscripts were sent into combat and suffered heavy losses.

Col. Retired Viktor Murakhovsky noted that Putin's decree on Thursday reflected the pressure of filling the ranks amid the military action in Ukraine.

In comments carried by the RBC online news outlet, he charged that the Kremlin would likely try to keep relying on volunteers and predicted that they would account for the bulk of the increase ordered by the Kremlin.

Another Russian military expert, Alexei Leonkov, also said the authorities wouldn't expand the draft and would increase the number of troops by hiring more contract soldiers.

"The new military equipment has become more complex, and people operating it need training for at least three years," Leonkov was quoted as saying by the state RIA Novosti news agency. "A draft won't help that, so there will be no increase in the number of draftees."

The Associated Press

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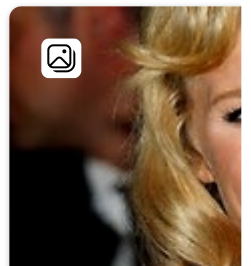


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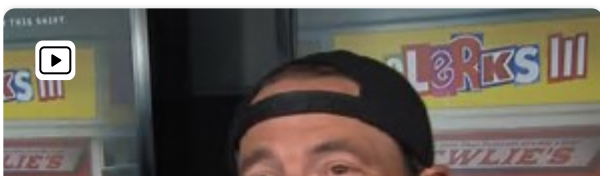
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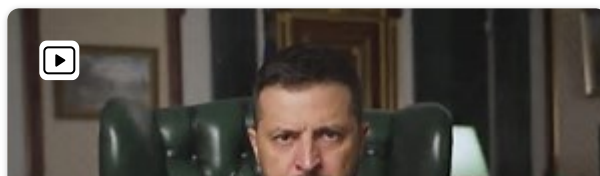
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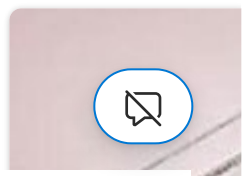
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A arrested after arriving at Toronto Pearson Airport on Wednesday, police say.



Shahid Malik was arrested at Pearson airport on Wednesday.
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Peel Regional Police said in a statement that between June and December of last year, “numerous victims” retained the services of Shahid Malik, the owner of Shahid Malik Law Office in Mississauga, in order to settle real estate transactions.

Police said Malik received millions of dollars in trust for transactions to allow the victims to pay off their outstanding mortgages.

“It is further alleged that despite the victims’ numerous requests, Shahid Malik did not allocate these funds towards the outstanding mortgages,” the statement said.

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[Warrant issued for Mississauga lawyer after alleged fraud worth more than \\$7.5 million](#)



AS SUCH, EACH VICTIM HAS SUFFERED A SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL LOSS.

In January, police announced that a warrant had been issued for Malik, who was wanted on charges of defrauding the public and breach of trust.

At the time, police said the alleged loss to victims totalled \$7.5 million. On Thursday, police said it's believed the losses are in excess of \$10 million.

Forty-one-year-old Malik, who is a Brampton resident, was arrested on the outstanding warrant at Pearson Airport Wednesday "upon returning to Canada," police said.

He has been charged with defrauding the public and breach of trust.

Malik appeared in a Brampton court and was held pending a bail hearing scheduled for Thursday.

"Mr. Malik used his position of trust to defraud a substantial amount of money from hard-working people in our community," Supt. Hubie Hiltz said.

"This investigation and arrest demonstrated our commitment to pursuing offenders, preventing further victimization and the value of collaboration with the Canada Border Service Agency."

Investigators said there may be more alleged victims.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Peel police's fraud bureau at 905-453-2121 ext. 3335 or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 1-800-222-8477.

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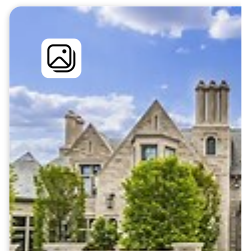
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