

# 20 Russian Volunteer Units Sign Military Contracts – Defense Ministry

June 22, 2023



Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu ordered volunteer units to sign military contracts. **Russian Defence Ministry**

*Updated with Shoigu's 50,000 volunteer fighters figure.*

More than 20 Russian volunteer detachments fighting alongside regular soldiers in Ukraine have signed contracts with the military, Russia's Defense Ministry [said](#) Thursday.

"The signed contracts define the legal regulation and activities of the volunteer corps formations in the zone of the 'special military operation'," the military said, using the Kremlin's preferred term for the invasion of Ukraine.

Russian military officials did not disclose the names and locations of the units.

Earlier this month, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu ordered volunteer detachments to sign contracts with the military, arguing that it would improve combat effectiveness.

Shoigu [said](#) Thursday that over 50,000 volunteers have signed up alongside 114,000 contract

soldiers in Russia's latest recruitment drive.

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“Volunteers” is an umbrella term used for the tens of thousands of men who have chosen to fight in Ukraine.

They include those serving in battalions formed by [regional authorities](#), Cossack units and Russia's so-called Special Combat Army Reserve.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's Akhmat military unit was widely promoted as the [first](#) volunteer detachment to have signed a contract with the Defense Ministry.

Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Priogzhin, who has for months feuded with Russia's military leadership, [publicly defied](#) Shoigu's orders.

President Vladimir Putin appeared to back Shoigu last week when he called on all volunteers to sign contracts with the military — prompting [another refusal](#) from Prigozhin.

Russian authorities have encouraged volunteers to join the military since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Putin [signed](#) a law in December recognizing volunteer fighters as war veterans, thus guaranteeing them generous pensions and numerous other benefits.

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