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BATTLE WEARY

Ukraine faces a shortage of troops to relieve tired fighters at the front



Newly recruited soldiers shout slogans at a military base close to Kyiv, Ukraine, on Sept. 25, 2023. ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTOS

Prediction markets spend millions on lobbying

Groups trying to influence state, federal governments

By Kevin Hardy
STATELINE.ORG

Kalshi, Polymarket and the Coalition for Prediction Markets have spent at least \$3 million this year on lobbying and campaign contributions across the federal and state levels, according to a new report from the government watchdog group OpenSecrets.

Prediction market platforms say they are like commodity markets that offer contracts to speculate on the future price of corn or oil — not sportsbooks that allow gamblers to place bets. But many states reject those justifications, arguing the platforms offer a backdoor to skirt state gambling regulations, particularly on sports.

The issue has sparked action from state regulators, new legislation, and a flurry of lawsuits from states, prediction markets, and the Trump administration, which has sought to sideline state oversight.

Kalshi, by far the largest prediction market platform, has targeted much of its political spending on governors and state attorneys general.

OpenSecrets found that Kalshi poured more than \$300,000 combined into the two major political organizations dedicated to

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Student loan borrowers have more time to reduce their rate

Here's what to know

By Adriana Morga
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Student loan borrowers now have until the end of 2026 to enroll in auto pay and have their interest rate reduced by 1%.

The original deadline was Sept. 30, but the U.S. Department of Education extended it to give borrowers more time to enroll. The rate reduction will last through June 2028.

Borrowers who currently use auto pay already receive an interest-rate discount of 0.25%, so the new reduction takes off just 0.75%.

This temporary benefit is meant to support

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By Samya Kullab
ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's advances in drone technology and tactics have captured the world's attention. Despite those innovations, one problem has plagued the country since the start of Russia's invasion: a shortage of combat-ready troops.

Ukraine always has been outmanned by Russia, but as the war drags through its fifth year, the need for personnel is increasingly acute, commanders and analysts say, with some units at only half strength. There just aren't enough forces to fully exploit the battlefield advantages resulting from the drone innovations.

"Based on the equipment and the number of people we have today, we barely have enough to hold the sector we currently have," said a deputy commander of the Da Vinci Wolves battalion in eastern Ukraine's Pokrovsk area, a focus of Russia's offensive.

"To move forward would inevitably mean greater losses," said the deputy commander, who insisted on identifying himself only as "Afer" because of military rules.

Long-standing mobilization problems, including draft dodging and desertion, make it harder for Ukraine to build its reserves, according to military experts, resulting in only incremental changes along the 775-mile front line.

UKRAINE NEEDS TO REPLENISH EXHAUSTED FRONT-LINE FORCES

Ukraine needs to be able to commit forces quickly without taking them from elsewhere on the front. Otherwise,



Newly recruited soldiers of Ukraine's 3rd Assault Brigade line up at a military base close to Kyiv, Ukraine, on Sept. 25, 2023.

commanders have fewer options to turn a temporary advantage into a sustained operation, said Nick Reynolds of the U.K.-based Royal United Services Institute, a defense and security think tank.

The shortage means that units can't be rotated often enough, he said, "leading to exhaustion and, in turn, exacerbating casualties."

The Defense Ministry, which in July underwent a shake-up by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is trying to tackle the problem with reforms to mobilization, training and the way the army is organized.

Uneven performance by front-line units worsens the problem. Weaker formations suffer heavier losses, creating a cycle of high attrition and constant replenishment.

The ministry did not respond to Associated Press requests for comment, but one of its officials summarized the problem by saying, "There just are not enough people."

Developing a new mobilization policy, including encouraging deserters to return to duty, is among the most sensitive issues under consideration, said the official, who was not authorized to brief the media and spoke on condition of anonymity.

FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER HAD SOUGHT MILITARY REFORMS

Former Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, who was replaced by Yevhenii

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With violins, trumpets and the guitarrón, Las Vegas is training the mariachi educators of tomorrow

By Jessica Hill
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — Axel Rodríguez Olivas nervously steps on stage, carrying a violin. He raises his bow and begins to play, his nerves melting away.

Mariachi music explodes throughout the room as violins, trumpets, the guitarrón, and a stringed instrument called the vihuela launch into an upbeat melody. There they are joined

by a warm voice as a tenor begins to sing.

"I think joy is what I feel ultimately," said Rodríguez Olivas, dressed in an ornate "traje charro," the traditional mariachi suit brightly decked out with decorative metal buttons and a wide bow tie.

The 20-year-old musician is set to become the first student to graduate with a minor in mariachi from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, one of the only universities in the country

to offer such a niche specialization.

In a city where Latinos comprise more than a third of the population, mariachi music is so popular in schools that there often aren't enough teachers to meet demand. The minor was created to train students to become mariachi educators in the Clark County School District, which boasts of one of the largest mariachi programs in the U.S. with about 6,000 students taking part.

MARIACHI IS A YEAR-ROUND PRESENCE IN LAS VEGAS

Not just a popular student extracurricular, mariachi culture is a staple and deep-seated form of entertainment across Las Vegas.

"If you go out today, there's going to be mariachi somewhere on the Strip," said Stephen Blanco, who oversees the mariachi minor at UNLV

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Axel Rodríguez Olivas, center, and Blavier Bojorquez, left, warm up with other University of Nevada, Las Vegas mariachi students before performing Oct. 3 in Las Vegas. JOHN LOCHER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

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