

# CIA Launches Effort to Recruit Russian Spies

**N** [newsweek.com/cia-launches-effort-recruit-russian-spies-1800667](https://www.newsweek.com/cia-launches-effort-recruit-russian-spies-1800667)

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## News

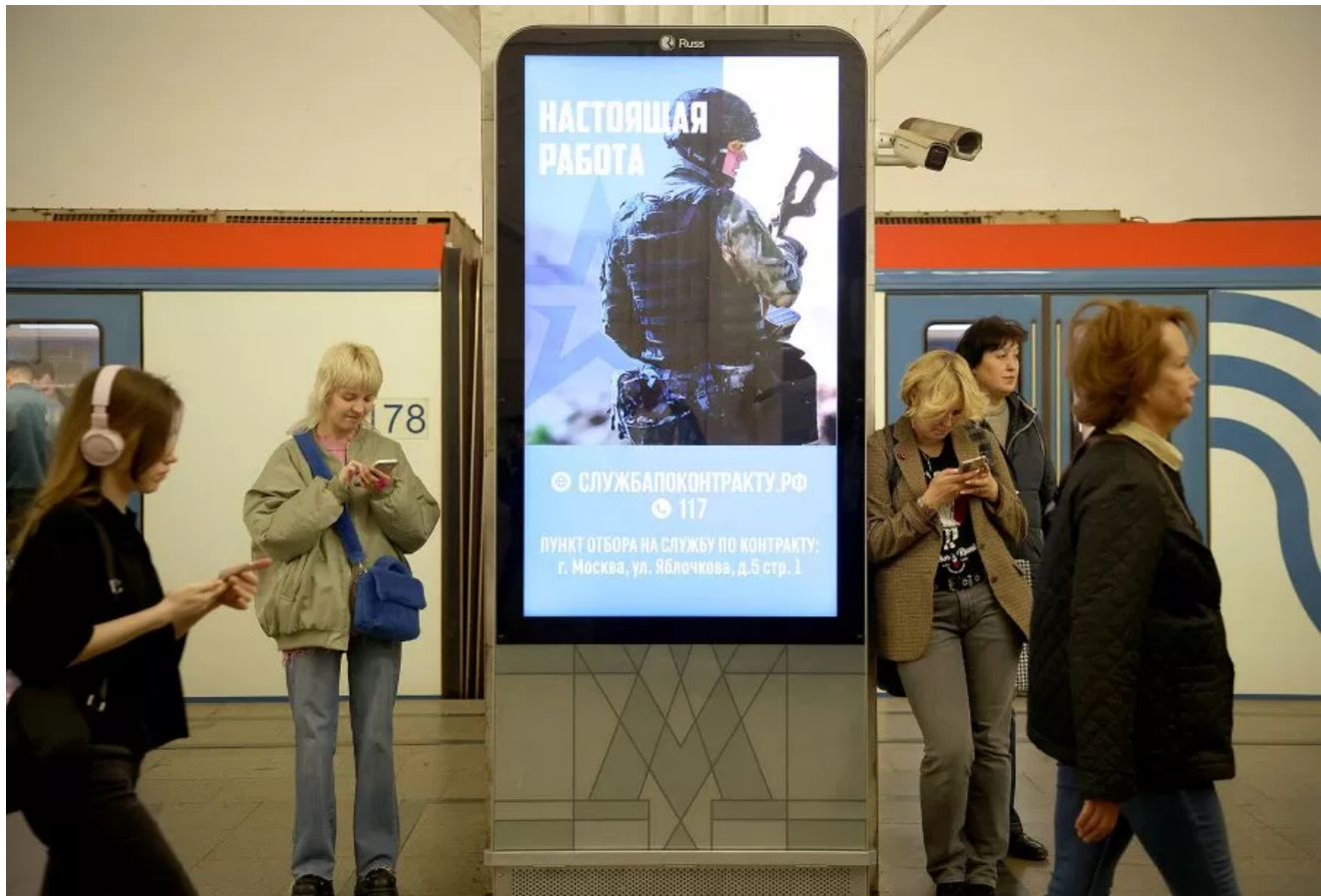
By [Jon Jackson](#) On 5/16/23 at 1:03 PM EDT

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on Monday launched a new initiative designed to persuade Russians to share information.

The agency is targeting citizens in the country who are against the war in Ukraine or are dissatisfied with life in Russia. In order to reach these Russians, the CIA posted a recruitment video it posted on its official YouTube, [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts. The CIA also created a new Telegram channel for tips.

Opinion polls in Russia, many of which are filtered through Kremlin-back media outlets, show the [public largely supports](#) the war in Ukraine as well as Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#). However, a [February poll conducted](#) by the independent Moscow-based research group Chronicles found support for the war is beginning to decrease due to economic difficulties it has caused the public.

The CIA's video for Russians notably does not mention Putin or Ukraine, but it does make an emotional case for cooperation by using the country's history and culture with quotes from authors Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.



Passengers check their smartphones amongst a billboard advertising contract service in the army, at the subway station, on May 12, 2023, in Moscow, Russia. The CIA launched an effort this week to try to get Russians to anonymously share information with the agency. Getty

In the clip, Russians of different ages appear to be weighing their thoughts on important issues before the video ends by detailing how to contact the CIA safely and anonymously.

"Contact us. Perhaps the people around you don't want to hear the truth. We want to," the text on the video reads.

Ronald A. Marks, a former CIA officer and current visiting professor at the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University, told *Newsweek* that along with trying to gain information, the CIA is likely trying to send a message to the Kremlin with the video.

"Number one is you're sending a message to the opposition that you think they're weak," Marks said. "Number two, no matter what the opposition may or may want to do, it's going to make them clutch a little bit. Put categories one and two together, and you're screwing around with their head."

Michael van Landingham, a former CIA analyst who runs the consultancy Active Measures LLC, also said that the ads could be thought of as "a marketing campaign in part to upset the Russian authorities."

"They are the social media equivalent of a 'cold pitch,' where an intelligence officer approaches another without previous contact and asks them to volunteer information," Van Landingham told *Newsweek*. "These pitches are aggressive and low yield, and mostly just create a headache for the officer who gets pitched because they must report the approach to their agency."

Marks described the segment of the Russian population that may be drawn to the video's message.

"In terms of finding someone [with information], there is a younger population there that is very unhappy. They're unhappy all over the place, from top to bottom," Marks said. "Let's say, for instance, you have the equivalent of an angry sergeant. How is that person going to respond to something like this? Wouldn't it be interesting if that put them in a position where they say, 'I'm really angry with these guys. I'm going to show them.'"

According to Van Landingham, the ads "are low effort and the U.S. should continue to let Russians know the CIA and FBI are open to 'digital walk-ins.'"

Marks noted that Russian officials could try to take advantage of the recruitment video by feeding the agency false information, but he said the CIA is aware that will likely happen.

The Kremlin has already acknowledged they are aware of the video. When asked about the video by reporters on Tuesday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had not paid attention to it but said he was "convinced that our special services are monitoring this space in the necessary way."

"We all know perfectly well that the CIA and other Western intelligence services are not reducing their activity on the territory of our country," Peskov added, according to the Russian state-controlled outlet Tass.

Marks called the video "an interesting, 21st century-approach to trying to get people to either to defect or give information.

"It's a little out of the box, because, frankly, we don't have a box anymore," he said.

*Newsweek* reached out to the CIA via email for comment.