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Investigators Open Case Into Russian Journalist's Death as Kremlin Blames Ukraine

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Russia's Investigative Committee has opened a criminal investigation into the death of Rossia Segodnya correspondent Andrei Stenin, now confirmed to have died while reporting from Ukraine in early August.

Investigators said in a statement that Stenin, 33, was killed on Aug. 6 by shelling from Ukrainian troops of more than 10 vehicles near the town of Snezhnoye in eastern Ukraine.

The day after the incident, the statement says, citing unidentified witnesses, Ukrainian military officers arrived on the scene and took the personal belongings of the victims. After they left, the Ukrainian military once again shelled the area, the statement says.

Authorities in Kiev also vowed Wednesday to investigate Stenin's death but said that matters were complicated by the fact that the spot where he was killed was under the control of pro-

Russian separatists, Interfax reported, citing Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov.

"Without access to the body, without determining how he was killed, we cannot conduct an investigation," Gerashchenko was cited as saying.

In a separate report by online tabloid LifeNews, Gerashchenko was also cited as saying the Ukrainian military had not carried out any military operations in the area where Stenin was killed and that the pro-Russian separatists were probably responsible.

"We believe that, most likely, this was done by the rebels themselves, who are using narcotics," Gerashchenko was cited as saying by LifeNews.

In a strongly worded statement published earlier Wednesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry placed all blame for Stenin's death on Ukrainian troops, saying the "latest barbaric killing is once again the doing of Ukrainian security forces and the National Guard." The statement goes on to cite witnesses as saying the territory where Stenin's remains were found — in a vehicle that had been shot up and burned — was controlled by Ukrainian troops.

Stenin was last in contact with Russia's state-run news agency Rossia Segodnya on Aug. 5.

On Aug. 27, pro-Russian separatists gave Russian investigators the remains of five people discovered in a burned-out vehicle on the road from Snezhnoye to Dmitrovka, the Investigative Committee said.

A medical examiner determined that one of the bodies belonged to Stenin on Wednesday.

President Vladimir Putin sent his condolences to Andrei's mother, Vera Stenina, and praised Stenin's work, saying he "fulfilled his task as a journalist and human being until the very end."

"He did everything so that people, the entire world, would know the truth about the tragic events happening in Donetsk," Putin said, according to a transcript of the note on the Kremlin's website.

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