Veteran Chechen Commander Killed Fighting in Ukraine

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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Prominent Chechen commander Isa Munayev has reportedly been killed in eastern Ukraine, where he was battling alongside Kiev government troops against pro-Moscow separatists.

Munayev — a veteran of Chechnya's wars for independence from Russia — was killed Sunday near the town of Debaltseve, said Amina Okuyeva, a press officer for the Dzhokhar Dudayev peacekeeping battalion, which Munayev commanded.

He was providing cover for Kiev-loyal forces that were withdrawing after "successfully completing a mission" when he was killed by artillery fire, Okuyeva said Monday in a statement posted on the Odessa Crisis Media Center website.

"As a result of his heroic actions, Isa Munayev has saved the lives of dozens of Ukrainian soldiers, but he himself perished in artillery fire," Okuyeva said in the statement.

But Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who last year offered to send troops to protect Ukraine's now-ousted president, wrote Tuesday on his Instagram account that Munayev was nothing more than a "drunk."

He also accused another Chechen fighter, Adam Osmayev, as well as Okuyeva, the spokesperson from the Dzhokhar Dudayev battalion, of having killed Munayev on the orders of Ukraine's Security Services and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, without providing any further details.

Kadyrov has been known in the past to blame Western intelligence agencies for all manner of sin. On Saturday he wrote via Instagram that the CIA and other agencies had been using fake social media accounts to lure Russian fighters to join the Islamic State.

At a rally in Grozny in mid-January — held to protest the re-publication of cartoons mocking the prophet Muhammad after journalists at French newspaper Charlie Hebdo were gunned down by Islamists for making such cartoons — Kadyrov said that "intelligence agencies of Western countries may have been behind the [Paris] incident to provoke a new wave of recruiting for the Islamic State," Russian media reported at the time.

Osmayev had spent more than two years in an Odessa jail after having been arrested in 2012 — under Ukraine's previous, Moscow-backed administration — for having supposedly plotted to assassinate Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A Ukrainian court released him last year, ruling that he had served enough time for his botched rehearsal of an alleged assassination attempt, media reports said at that time.

Many seasoned fighters who fought in the first (1994-96) and second (1999-2000) Chechen wars are fighting on both sides in the Ukraine conflict, The Associated Press reported in December.

Munayev, who had been living in Denmark, moved to Ukraine last summer and formed the battalion, named in a tribute to Chechnya's late president and former Soviet Air Force general who led the republic's first separatist war against Moscow.

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