

Russia Demands Access to 2 Russians Caught 'Spying' in Ukraine

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A man, according to Ukraine's state security service one of two Russian servicemen recently detained by Ukrainian forces, lies on a bed at a hospital in Kiev, May 19.

Russia's Foreign Ministry has demanded the right to visit two citizens detained last week in eastern Ukraine who Kiev says are Russian soldiers guilty of carrying out "terrorist acts" on its territory.

Kiev said Monday the two men had killed Ukrainian troops and would be prosecuted. It has used them to support its accusations of direct Russian participation in the separatist conflict. Moscow denies active military involvement.

The Russian Embassy in Kiev has asked to meet the detained men and to provide them with "necessary help in accordance with the norms of international law," the Foreign Ministry said Tuesday in a statement.

"The Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation ... has already said these citizens are not currently serving in the Russian armed forces," the ministry statement added.

TASS news agency quoted Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov on Monday as saying the two prisoners had served in the Russian armed forces but were no longer Russian soldiers on May 17, the day they were captured.

In a video posted online by the Ukrainian Interior Ministry on Monday, one of the prisoners who gave his name as Alexander Alexandrov said he had been on a spying mission as part of a 14-member special forces group from the Russian town of Togliatti.

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