

Russian Conscript Beaten to Death by Senior Soldier

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A 19-year-old Russian army conscript who was serving the last few days of his compulsory military service at an airbase in the Chelyabinsk region has died nine days after he was beaten over the head with an iron flask by his immediate superior, Interfax reported on Thursday.

The conflict broke out when the senior soldier, identified in media reports only by his last name Zainutdinov, ordered the conscript, Denis Ovodov, to clean up an area on July 2, according to Alexei Kovalev, adviser to the local human rights ombudsman.

“After hearing the soldier's refusal, his supervisor hit him over the head with an iron flask at least three times,” Kovalev told Interfax.

Following the attack, Ovodov fell into a coma and never regained consciousness. A criminal case has been opened by local military investigators into exceeding official authority with the use of violence leading to serious consequences. If found guilty, Zainutdinov faces up to 10 years in prison.

Hazing by senior soldiers has plagued the Russian army for decades with multiple cases of

suicides and fatal beatings. After several high-profile incidents in which draftees died, the Defense Ministry launched a campaign against the problem. In August, Russia's military prosecutor claimed that the number of hazing cases had decreased by almost a third in the first half of 2014, the Rossiiskaya Gazeta government newspaper reported.

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