

Russian Soldier Accused of Killing Armenian Family Tried

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Valery Permyakov

A 19-year-old Russian soldier accused of killing seven members of an Armenian family has been convicted of desertion as a precursor to his murder trial.

Valery Permyakov, who served with a Russian military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri, is suspected of shooting six family members dead and stabbing a 6-month-old baby to death there in January.

He was captured quickly after the killings near the Armenian-Turkish border and pleaded guilty to the charges, reportedly telling prosecutors that he deserted from the army out of homesickness and randomly picked the house of his victims to find money and clothes, and ended up opening fire out of fear.

A Russian military court in Gyumri, Armenia's second city, on Wednesday handed Permyakov a 10-year prison sentence on charges of desertion, stealing firearms and ammunition and illegal weapons possession. Armenian investigators are pursuing a separate murder

probe, and a date for that trial hasn't been set yet.

Permyakov's lawyer demanded at the court hearing that his client not be asked questions regarding the killings because they are still being investigated by Armenian law enforcement authorities, Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe reported.

Russia agreed to let Armenia handle the murder investigation after the incident sparked protests in both Gyumri and the Armenian capital, Yerevan, calling for the soldier to face justice on Armenian soil.

(AP, MT)

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