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Kremlin Rights Council Urges Investigation Into 159 Soldier Deaths

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Russian Investigative Committee

A member of Russia's Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights intends to call on the country's civil and military investigative bodies to look into the 159 army deaths reported in 2014 and 2015, following the completion of an independent probe, the RBC news portal wrote Tuesday.

Sergei Krivenko, who heads the council's military-civic relations section, is preparing to petition Russia's Investigative Committee and Chief Military Prosecutor to investigate selected cases dating from the period between January 2014 and July 2015, citing a dearth of information on the circumstances of the deaths after Russia's Defense Ministry and other official bodies stopped publishing casualty statistics in 2011, the report went on to say.

According to Krivenko, who was quoted by RBC as saying he wished to limit the discussion to cases which were “reliably” covered by public sources, only about two out of three reports

mentioned an investigation by Russia's prosecution services or other investigative bodies — which he claimed contradicted earlier practice.

He also said his findings pointed to a dramatic rise in casualties in the second half of 2014, coinciding with a period of intensified fighting in Ukraine's eastern Donbass region. Those accounted for 68 percent of total loss of life over the 19 months.

He added that 80 percent of deaths reported between July and Dec 2014 "had not been sufficiently explained" — a situation he called "unacceptable in peacetime," RBC reported.

"The circumstances of a sharp rise in military deaths over a short period require thorough investigation by the state and special attention from the public," Krivenko was quoted as saying.

The last official report on army losses was made by the Russian Prosecutor General Yury Chaika during a speech in February 2011, RBC wrote.

The Russian government denies the deployment of regular military forces in the Donbass region and eastern Ukraine.

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