

Russian Military Refuses to Re-Open Investigation Into Deaths of 159 Soldiers

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Russia's Chief Military Prosecutor Maxim Toporikov said on Tuesday he sees no grounds to re-examine the circumstances of the deaths of 159 Russian military servicemen, suspected to have been killed in Ukraine from Jan. 1, 2014 to July 30, 2015, the RBC news service reported.

A representative of the Kremlin's human rights commission, Sergey Krivenko, requested the military prosecutor look into the deaths of Russian servicemen after noticing an abnormally high mortality rate in the second half of 2014, as conflict escalated in eastern Ukraine.

Though Russia has denied involvement in the conflict, Western officials and the Ukrainian government in Kiev have alleged that Moscow deployed troops to fight alongside pro-Russian separatists in the region.

One hundred and eight Russian soldiers died in the final six months of 2014, according to Krivenko's letter to the military prosecutor, which was obtained by RBC. In 80 percent of the cases, he said, there is no clear information about how they died.

The chief military prosecutor denied Krivenko's request to further investigate their deaths, RBC reported, claiming that the initial investigation revealed no violations or instances of non-compliance with laws protecting soldiers and their families.

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