

Scandal Develops Around 'Staged' Ukrainian War Photos

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Dmitro Muravskiy

A Ukrainian photographer accused of staging an iconic image to engage with Russia in an “information war” has threatened legal action against his critics.

Dmitro Muravskiy, who works for the Ukrainian Defense Ministry, said that he would sue those who continued to “damage his reputation” by saying the photo was fake.

Muravskiy's photo shows two soldiers carrying an injured comrade while a dramatic explosion tears through the village behind them. The image was first published by army-aligned Ukrainian news website Tsensor.net, which claimed the photo had been taken in front-line Shyrokyne. It declared the story the photo told “should be spread around the world.”

In an open letter on the lb.ua website, 20 Ukrainian photo journalists, some of which have

worked with international news agencies such as AFP, AP and Reuters, accused Kiev of staging the shot as part of an “information war” with Russia.

“We would like to apologize on their behalf for such a mess and the clumsy attempts of [the Defense Ministry] to participate in the information war,” the letter reads.

“We kindly ask not to put these photos on a par with Russian fakes. The war is really going on, people are dying, and to prove it there is huge number of documentary photo and video evidence, [sic] both from international media and from our journalists.”

Muravskiy defended his work in a post on his social media page, saying that he wanted to “wash away the dirt, undeservedly poured on me by my so-called peers.”

“I am not a professional photojournalist,” he wrote on Facebook. “What matters in a photo is emotion, not where, when and by whom it is made.”

A number of photos taken by his team were “for future publications as posters or billboards,” Muravskiy admitted. “As I realized later, that their presence gave rise to the conclusion that all of my photos are staged,” he wrote: “My only response to new charges will be only in the form of legal action for causing damage to business reputation.”

More than 9,500 people have died in the conflict in eastern Ukraine since it began in April 2014.

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