

Putin Posthumously Honors Russian Journalists Killed in 1991 Yugoslav Wars

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A Serbian boy looks at a Yugoslav People's Army tank moving into the Serbian city of Sid on Sept. 20, 1991. **AP Photo / Laurent Rebours**

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an executive order on Monday posthumously awarding the Order of Courage to two Russian journalists killed in one of the Yugoslav Wars in 1991, shortly before the official dissolution of the Soviet Union.

On Sept. 1, 1991, Viktor Nugin and Gennadi Kurennoy, two reporters for the USSR's Gosteleradio, traveled by car from Belgrade to cover hostilities between the Croatian army and Serb militiamen.

After filming in Croatian military camps, Nugin and Kurennoy were ambushed by Serbian militiamen. Although they had their Soviet passports and press accreditation, they were shot on the spot.

It remains unclear what prompted the Serbian fighters to execute journalists from a country

traditionally friendly to Serbia, but theories have emerged that Serbian fighters mistook the reporters for Croatian spies or that they simply wanted the footage of the Croatian positions.

The two men's bodies were never recovered and their killers remain at large. Their assailants did their best to cover their tracks and block the investigation.

The reporters' car was burned and dumped in a nearby river. Two bodies discovered in the car did not match the identities of the reporters.

Subsequent investigations conducted by Soviet and Russian authorities did not lead to convictions. Most culprits and witnesses to the killing are believed to have perished in the wars that followed the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

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