Russian Death Certificate Reveals Real Syrian Casualty Count

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Roman Demyanenko / TASS

Upwards of 131 Russians have died in Syria since the start of the year, a death certificate published by the Reuters news agency on Friday reveals.

Official estimates place the figure of Russian military deaths in Syria at less than half that figure over the country's 2-year mission in the embattled country.

An Oct. 4 death certificate stamped by the consulate department of the Russian Embassy in Syria and signed by the consul names a 131st death in 2017.

A friend and a relative of the dead Russian national told Reuters he had served as a private military contractor in the conflict-torn country.

Reuters cites an unnamed official at the consulate in Syria as saying that Russian diplomatic missions don't register the deaths of servicemen.

The Russian military does not officially acknowledge contractors deployed in Syria or their deaths.

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The cause of Sergei Poddubny's death at age 36 is named as "incineration of the body," according to the document shared by Reuters.

The agency quotes Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying that it doesn't have data about "individual citizens who visit Syria.

Local election figures from the September 2016 legislative vote [show](#) almost 5,400 registered voters were in Syria at the time.

Reuters contrasts its tally of 26 Russian mercenaries' deaths this year to the official toll of 16 military deaths in 2017.

The Russian consulate worker is cited by Reuters as saying: "It is as if the diaspora is dying out."

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