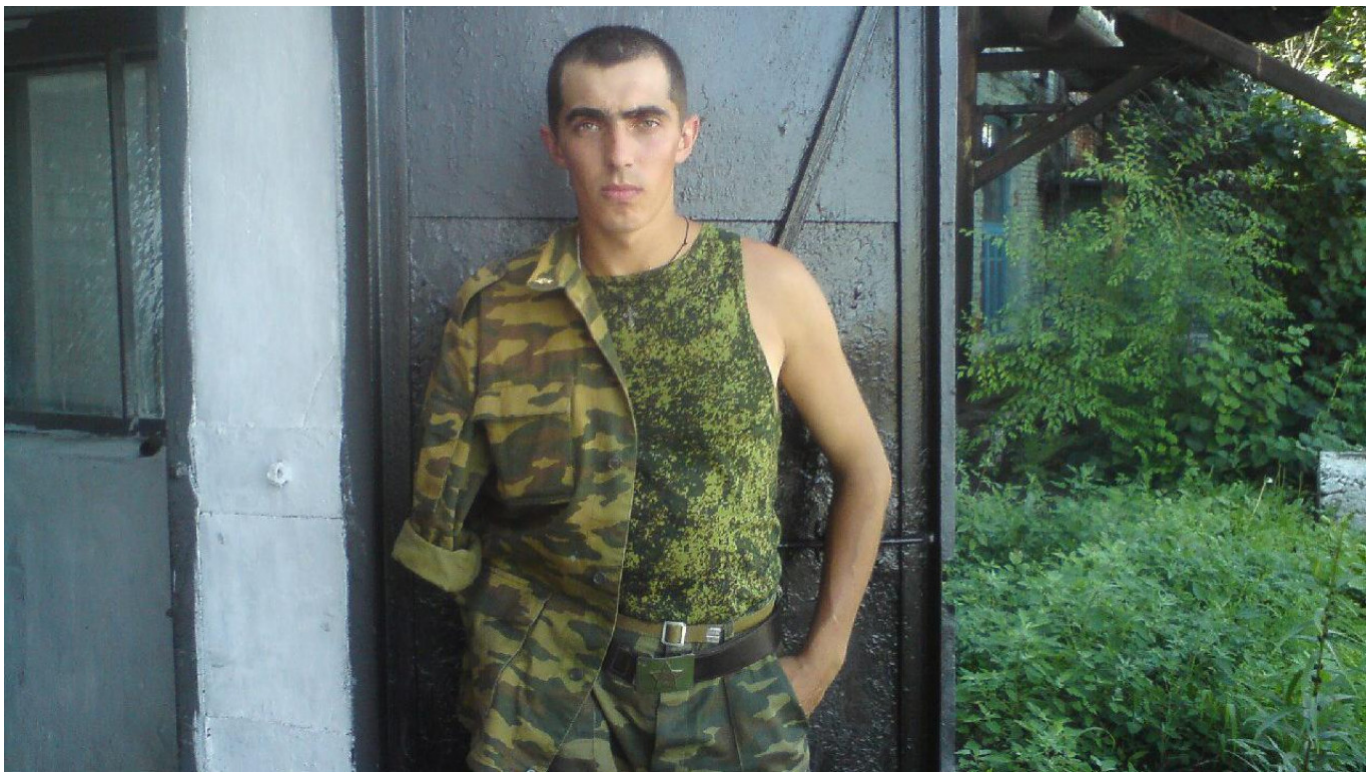
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Mercenary From Wagner Group Reported Killed in Syria

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Yury Ebel / Vkontakte

Another Russian from the Wagner mercenary group has been killed in Syria, a provincial Russian news site reported Wednesday.

Although mercenaries are banned under Russian law, the Kremlin-linked Wagner private military contractor is believed to have played central roles in conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.

Yury Ebel from the republic of Mordovia died Oct. 20 in shelling that killed 18 people in total, according to the news site Stolitsa-S.

Ebel joined Wagner — named after the nom de guerre of its founder Dmitry Utkin — after completing his draft service in the Russian army, a friend told the RBC business portal. It was his third tour of duty in Syria, she said.

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Ebel is survived by his wife and eight-month-old son, RBC reported.

The independent investigative group Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT) said photos from Ebel's social media account indicate that he was drafted into the army in 2012.

The private served in a Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) Special Forces brigade.

He was also described as deployed in a "peace-keeping unit" in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Several photos on his account were geotagged in Rostov Region near the Ukrainian border in the autumn of 2014.

His death brings the number of Wagner contractors who have died fighting in Syria to 8, according to CIT.

The Russian Defense Ministry does not acknowledge contractors' in the war or their deaths.

At least 36 Russian servicemen have died since Moscow launched its campaign in Syria in late September 2015, according to a tally by Kommersant based on official figures.

Reuters has reported that at least 40 Russians have died fighting in Syria this year alone, a claim which the Russian Defense Ministry denies.

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