Russian Fighters Killed in U.S. Airstrikes in Syria Identified

February 13, 2018

Bassam Khabieh / Reuters

The names of Russian military contractors reportedly killed in clashes between U.S.-led coalition and pro-Syrian government forces last week have begun to surface.

An estimated 100 pro-Syrian regime fighters were killed in U.S.-led coalition airstrikes in the southeastern province of Deir Ezzor last Wednesday. Russia partially withdrew its forces from Syria in December 2017 after two years fighting in support of President Bashar al-Assad, though hundreds of its private military contractors remain in the country.

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The Reuters news agency spoke Monday with two people who said that Russian fighters Vladimir Loginov and Kirill Ananyev were killed with 'dozens' of other Russians on Feb. 7.

The open-source investigation collective Conflict Intelligence Team corroborated reports

of Loginov's death in Syria and added three names to the list: Alexei Ladygin, Stanislav Matveyev and Igor Kosoturov.

'It is notable that the posts about their deaths emerged rather quickly — relatives and colleagues often learn of Russian mercenaries' deaths weeks or even months after the fact,' CIT said in a Facebook post.

The investigative team said the total number of Russian victims of the airstrike is unlikely to be established, but said 'it is beyond doubt that this incident indeed took place.'

Although Russia's Defense Ministry said no uniformed Russian soldiers were killed in the U.S. coalition strike, an ex-commander of Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine claimed two tactical units of the Wagner private military group had been hit that day.

'I didn't even know that he went [to Syria]. I am simply in shock," Matveyev's cousin Igor Patsko told the RBC business portal.