

# Russia Acknowledges Possible Syria Deaths as Evidence of Mercenary Fatalities Mounts

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Maria Zakharova **Sergei Savostianov / TASS**

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson has acknowledged that up to five Russians may have died in U.S. airstrikes in Syria earlier this month.

U.S. airstrikes were reported to have killed up to 200 mercenaries attempting to take over a Syrian oil refinery on Feb. 7. The Kremlin [denies](#) any official link to the fighters.

Reports of hundreds of Russian deaths is "classic disinformation," Maria Zakharova [told](#) reporters during a press briefing on Thursday.

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“We’re not talking about 400, 200, 100 and not 10,” she said. “According to preliminary data, as a result of armed clashes the cause of which is being ascertained, we could be talking about the deaths of five people, presumably Russian citizens.”

“All of this is subject to confirmation, particularly whether they are all citizens of Russia or other countries,” Zakharova added. “I’d like to emphasize once again that we’re not talking about Russian military personnel.”

The open-source investigative group Conflict Intelligence Team’s latest [tally](#) went up to seven Russian citizens killed and one Ukrainian as of Wednesday.

President Vladimir Putin’s administration has maintained that no Russian military personnel has been killed in clashes with U.S.-led forces in Syria last week.

“We’ve already said all that we could say on this topic, we have nothing to add,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [told](#) reporters Thursday, as quoted by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency. \_

Peskov denied that Putin had ordered to classify details about Russian nationals killed or wounded in Syria.

His comments come on the heels of an Agence France-Presse [report](#) saying 15 more Russian private security staff died in the same region of Syria on Wednesday.

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