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Russia Admits to 'Dozens' of Casualties in Syria Clashes

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Russia's Foreign Ministry has admitted that "several dozens" of its nationals were injured in recent clashes with U.S.-led forces in Syria, days after acknowledging five deaths in the battle.

Russian casualty numbers in the Feb. 7 U.S. airstrikes in Deir Ezzor vary widely, with some outlets claiming that up to 200 Russian mercenaries were killed while attempting to take over a Syrian oil refinery. While the Kremlin has repeatedly denied having any connection to the fighters, the Foreign Ministry said last week that five Russian citizens had "presumably" been killed.

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"The recent military clashes, in no way involving Russian servicemen or service equipment, resulted in the deaths of citizens of Russia and the CIS [former Soviet republics], as already

mentioned," the ministry said in an online statement Tuesday.

"There are also several dozens wounded," it added, without specifying exact numbers.

The statement appears to confirm media reports last week that said scores of Russian mercenaries were being treated at Russian military hospitals.

"They were helped in returning to Russia where, to our knowledge, they are undergoing treatment in various medical institutions," the Foreign Ministry said in Tuesday's statement.

The ministry repeated that the fighters had traveled to Syria "on their own volition and for various purposes."

"It's not for the Foreign Ministry to judge the competence and legality of their decisions," it added.

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