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Missing Soviet Pilot Turns Up Alive in Afghanistan, 30 Years After War

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Nikolay Akimov and Valentin Kuzmin / TASS

A Russian war pilot presumed to be shot down in Afghanistan in the 1980s has reportedly turned up alive, decades after Soviet troops pulled out of the Islamic republic.

Officially, 417 Soviet soldiers were declared a missing or as prisoners of war in the 1979-1989 conflict that saw over 15,000 Soviet military losses.

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Valery Vostrotin, the head of Russia's union of airborne troops, told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency that the newly-found pilot's return would require "not only financial but also administrative, civil society and diplomatic efforts."

"It's very unusual," Vostrotin told RIA, declining to provide the pilot's name, citing concerns

over confidentiality.

The missing soldier looks forward to returning to Russia, Vyacheslav Kalinin, a senior member of the Boyevoye Bratstvo (Brothers in Arms) organization, told the agency.

“What’s surprising isn’t even that the pilot stayed alive after his aircraft was shot down by the mujahideen, but the fact that we haven’t received any information about him for decades,” he was quoted as saying.

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