Russia Covered up Soldier's Death in Syria, Media Reports

January 09, 2019

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The Russian military has reportedly tried to suppress news of a soldier's death in Syria.

Officials estimate that 112 Russian soldiers have been killed in the three years since Moscow intervened in the Syrian civil war on the side of government forces.

Junior sergeant Andranik Arustamyan died in a mine accident at a checkpoint in eastern Syria on Nov. 2, 2018, the BBC Russia service reported Wednesday, citing his death certificate.

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The investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper first reported the incident in November, writing that six Russian mercenaries were killed in a blast. The outlet reported the date of the explosion as Nov. 4 instead of the Nov. 2 blast that BBC Russia cites.

"Everyone here in Totskoye knew that he was dead, and the command didn't hide this from anyone," Arustamyan's unnamed brother was quoted by BBC Russia as saying, referring to the family's home village in the Orenburg region some 1,300 kilometers southeast of Moscow.

"It's another matter that the Defense Ministry tries to avoid reporting the losses so as not to deter new volunteers," the brother added.

Arustamyan was reportedly killed at age 28 less than a month after arriving for his second tour of duty in Syria.

BBC Russia estimates a death toll of 175 Russian troops in Syria between 2015 and 2018.

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