

Russia, Ukraine Near Prisoner Swap Including Jailed Sailors – Reports

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Detained Ukrainian sailors **Kirill Zukov / Moskva News Agency**

Update: The date of the prisoner exchange has been postponed indefinitely, a lawyer for several of the Russians detained in Ukraine has told Russian media. The final lists of prisoners to be exchanged haven't yet been approved and could still change, he added.

"Most likely, there are some forces in the office of [Ukrainian President] Volodymyr Zelenskiy who want to disrupt the exchange," the lawyer, Valentin Rybin, [told](#) the state-run TASS news agency on Aug. 28.

Russia and Ukraine have agreed to exchange as many as 66 prisoners held in both countries as soon as next week, including 24 Ukrainian sailors captured off the coast of Crimea last year, media outlets have reported.

Russia holds dozens of Ukrainian captives following five years of conflict in eastern Ukraine, but it is unclear how many Russians are being held by Kiev. The Kremlin said Thursday it was [in talks](#) with Kiev on a possible prisoner exchange, Ukrainian President Volodymyr

Zelenskiy's key campaign promise this year.

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Russia and Ukraine are close to swapping 33 captives from each side, the RBC news website [reported](#) Thursday, citing an unnamed source familiar with the negotiations. Two sources from each side familiar with the details of the negotiations later confirmed the report with RBC.

The prisoner exchange could happen by the end of August, the *Kommersant* business daily [reported](#) Thursday, citing unnamed sources familiar with Russian-Ukrainian negotiations. Russia would hand over the 24 Ukrainian sailors as part of the deal, *Kommersant* reported.

Ukrainian and Russian media outlets have [cited](#) a lawyer for one of the convicts as saying that the swap could take place as soon as Aug. 28 or Aug. 29. Five Ukrainians convicted in Russia had been [transferred](#) to a prison in Moscow earlier this week, which an RBC source said was a signal that preparations for the exchange were underway.

Related article: [Fate of Captured Ukrainian Sailors Must be Tied to Jailed Russians, Putin Says](#)

Ukraine's human rights chief is in Moscow ahead of the prisoner swap, RBC reported, and Russia's human rights chief reportedly [arrived](#) in Kiev Friday.

Jailed Russian-Ukrainian journalist Kirill Vyshinsky has [refused](#) to be exchanged, saying he wants to clear his name in Ukrainian court. Ukrainian filmmaker [Oleg Sentsov](#), who is serving a 20-year prison sentence in Russia, has not been mentioned in the reported Russian-Ukrainian exchange lists.

Zelenskiy had [offered](#) to exchange Vyshinsky for Sentsov last month as a "first step."

The Russian Navy captured the Ukrainian sailors and their three vessels in the Kerch Strait, which links the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, on Nov. 25, 2018, after opening fire on them. President Vladimir Putin [said](#) in June that the fate of the sailors must be linked to the release of Russian citizens held in Ukraine whom Moscow wants to see freed.

Kiev's forces have been battling pro-Russian separatists in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine since 2014, in a conflict that has claimed more than 13,000 lives. Sporadic fighting continues despite a ceasefire agreement.

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