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Ukraine Frees Jailed Russian Journalist Vyshinsky on Bail

By Reuters

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Kirill Vyshinsky **Sergei Dolzhenko / EPA / TASS**

A court in Ukraine ordered jailed Russian journalist Kirill Vyshinsky to be freed on bail and released from custody, as Moscow and Kiev hold behind-the-scenes talks on a possible prisoner swap.

Vyshinsky, the head of Russia's state-backed RIA Novosti news agency in Ukraine, was arrested last year and accused of supporting pro-Russian separatists. Vyshinsky faces up to 15 years in jail if convicted of the charges.

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The Kremlin said on Wednesday that Moscow welcomed the move to release Vyshinsky but declined to comment on the possibility of a reciprocal gesture by Moscow or plans for a

prisoner swap.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said last month that Kiev could release Vyshinsky if Moscow released Oleg Sentsov, a native of Crimea who opposed the peninsula's annexation by Moscow and who was jailed in 2015 on terrorism charges.

Ukrainian 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 the ceasefire agreement.

Russia is holding dozens of Ukrainian captives from the conflict as well as 24 navy sailors who were captured by the Russian Navy off the coast of Crimea last year.

Russia has said the case against Vyshinsky was a trumped-up and politically motivated attack on Russian media in Ukraine.

A senior Ukrainian official said last month that Ukraine and Russia had agreed on a prisoner swap, but gave no exact date for the exchange and said preparatory procedures could take several months.

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