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Kremlin Says Syria Beheading Video Not Linked to Russian Forces

By Alexander Marrow for Reuters

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Dmitry Peskov **Kremlin.ru**

The Kremlin on Thursday distanced itself from a video showing four Russian-speaking men torturing, stabbing and beheading a Syrian man in 2017 and said the incident had nothing to do with Russia's military.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had not seen the footage, but said: "I am certain that this has no relation to Russian military operations in Syria."

Related article: Russian Mercenaries Linked to Gruesome Syrian Torture and Beheading Video

Part of the video, obtained by the Novaya Gazeta newspaper, first appeared in June 2017, before new recordings emerged this month.

The gruesome footage shows a man being beaten with a sledgehammer and decapitated with a

spade before being strung up by his legs and his body set on fire.

Earlier this month, Arabic news outlet Jesr Press identified the victim as Mohammed Taha Ismail Al-Abdullah, a Syrian national.

The men responsible recorded their own video footage and made jokes as they dismembered the body.

When asked whether the Kremlin would look into the footage, given that it involved Russian speakers, Peskov said the Kremlin is not an investigative body.

Reuters has previously reported that Russia secretly used private military contractors in Syria to carry out missions in support of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, Moscow's ally, in coordination with the Russian military.

Russia denies using military contractors in Syria and says any Russian civilians there are volunteers.

Peskov said the Kremlin does not have information about the work of private companies and that he saw no risk of reputational damage to Russia because of the video.

"I can only talk about the actions and activities of Russian armed forces and units that act under orders from the Supreme commander."

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