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Russian Citizens Confront Official Over Ukraine Invasion in Sign of Domestic Cracks

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Kemerovo region Governor Sergei Tsivilev. **ako.ru**

A Russian official was confronted about Moscow's invasion of Ukraine by an angry group of citizens in a sign of growing domestic tensions surrounding the war.

A smartphone video circulating online since Sunday shows Sergei Tsivilev, the governor of southwest Siberia's Kemerovo region, attempting to defend Russia's military campaign as an angry crowd accused the authorities of deception.

The U.S.-funded RFE/RL news organization reported that Tsivilev had been speaking with the mothers of local soldiers deployed to Ukraine. It said the undated confrontation, in which the governor appeared flanked by men in uniforms, took place at a Novokuznetsk training base for riot police units.

"Why did they send our boys there?" a female voice can be heard asking Tsivilev.

The governor refused to answer their questions “while the military operation is in progress” and urged soldiers' mothers to avoid criticism “until it ends, which it will soon.”

“When everyone dies,” another voice can be heard saying.

Related article: Russia Detains Around 4,600 at Ukraine Conflict Protests

News of the meeting came as Russian authorities work to control the narrative over the war at home.

In its first and so far only declared death toll, Russia’s military said last Wednesday that 498 of its troops have been killed in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian military claimed Monday as many as 11,000 Russian troop casualties, a figure that is impossible to independently verify.

Almost 13,500 Russians across more than 100 cities have been detained at anti-war rallies in the 11 days since President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine, according to an independent monitor.

“They were sent as cannon fodder,” a voice in the video with governor Tsivilev was heard saying.

“They lied to everyone,” another voice said.

The crowd grew angrier over Tsivilev’s apparent slip-of-the-tongue, when he said Russian troops “were used” before he was interrupted.

Putin launched the campaign against Ukraine on Feb. 24, calling it an effort to “demilitarize and denazify” Russia's pro-Western neighbor.

In support of the special military operation, Tsivilev renamed Kemerovo’s unofficial title Kuzbass by replacing the Cyrillic letter “з” with the Latin “z,” which was seen painted on Russian military vehicles entering Ukraine.

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