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Ukraine Probing Russian Soldiers on Bucha War Crime Suspicions

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A crane lifts the corpse of a man from a mass grave to be identified in a morgue, in Bucha, on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine. **Rodrigo Abd / AP Photo / TASS**

Ukraine is investigating at least 10 Russian soldiers accused of committing war crimes against civilians while occupying the Kyiv suburb of Bucha last month, the country's prosecutor general Iryna Venediktova said Thursday.

Images of civilians apparently executed in the streets and harrowing accounts of torture emerged from Bucha and other Kyiv suburbs as Russian forces retreated from Ukraine's capital last month, shocking the world and sparking calls for a war crimes trial to be brought against Russia.

The six Russian officers and four privates under investigation allegedly belong to 64th Motor Rifle Brigade, a unit that President Vladimir Putin recently gave the honorary title of "Guards" for their "heroism and courage."

While stationed in Bucha, the 10 accused servicemen captured civilians, tortured them with

hunger and thrist and carried out mock executions, Venediktova said in a Facebook post.

She said the accusations are backed by evidence gathered by Ukrainian police and other investigative units.

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Venediktova said Putin's recognition of the 64th Guard Motor Rifle Brigade indicates that the atrocities in Bucha and other Ukrainian towns were coordinated with the highest ranks of the Russian army, and said Putin bears joint responsibility for the soldiers' actions.

Russian troops occupied Bucha, a city west of Kyiv, for a month after Putin sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Bucha's mayor estimates that 20% of the city's population that remained during the Russian occupation was massacred, with widespread reports of mass murder, rape and torture of civilians.

Russia has denied that its forces carried out the atrocities against civilians in Bucha, instead accusing Kyiv and its Western allies of staging the scenes.

Ukrainian investigators have identified more than 8,000 cases of suspected war crimes across the country since Russia's invasion, Venediktova told a German TV channel on Thursday.

"It's actually 8,600 cases only about war crimes, and more than 4,000 cases that are connected with war crimes," Venediktova told the Deutsche Welle broadcaster.

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