

Russian Major General Shot Down Over Ukraine – BBC Russian

May 24, 2022



Russian Major General Kanamat Botashev. elbrusoid.org

Major General Kanamat Botashev has become the highest-ranking Russian pilot to be killed in the skies over Ukraine, the BBC's Russian service [reported](#) Tuesday.

The 63-year-old retired general had been flying a Su-25 fighter jet over the Luhansk region on Sunday when the aircraft was targeted by a Stinger shoulder-fired missile system, the BBC reported, citing three of Botashev's former subordinates who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The pilot did not have time to eject from his aircraft and died.

According to the BBC's sources, the Su-25 had been on a mission to strike at Ukrainian positions around the town of Popasna, which was recently captured by Russian forces.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine [said](#) Sunday that its air force shot down a Russian Su-25 aircraft over the Luhansk region.

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If confirmed, Botashev joins a growing list of high-ranking Russian officers believed to have been killed in the line of combat in Ukraine.

Ukraine's Defense Ministry has said 12 Russian generals have been killed so far.

Russia has confirmed only two deaths among its generals in three months of fighting.

Botashev had been a regimental commander until he was forced to [retire](#) in 2012 after being found guilty of crashing an Su-27 fighter jet while performing acrobatics.

It is unclear how the retired commander ended up flying a fighter jet on the frontlines of the Ukraine war. His former subordinates who spoke to the BBC suggested that "he just couldn't stay on the sidelines."

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After failing to gain superiority over Ukraine's much smaller air force at the outset of the invasion, Russia has taken a largely risk-averse approach to air combat — but analysts have noted an uptick in Russian sorties in recent weeks.

The Ukrainian air force meanwhile continues to [fly sorties](#) and its anti-aircraft defenses remain operational, and Kyiv has received a steady supply of light anti-aircraft weapons such as Stinger missiles from its Western allies.

At least 31 Russian pilots have been killed, nine of whom were retired soldiers over 50 years old, the BBC [reported](#) this month.

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