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Russia Lost 900 'Elite' Soldiers in Ukraine Fighting — Report

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS

Russia has lost more than 900 special forces soldiers, paratroopers, marines and pilots in over six months of war in Ukraine, the BBC's Russian service reported Thursday citing publicly available data.

The deaths of such soldiers are particularly problematic for the Russian Armed Forces because they are very costly to replace.

At least 337 marines have been killed since the start of the invasion on Feb. 24, while the National Guard's special forces and riot police lost 245 troops, Russia's military intelligence lost 151 soldiers, elite paratrooper units saw 144 members killed and the Federal Security Service (FSB) and Federal Guards Service (FSO) together suffered 20 deaths, according to the BBC. Many of the dead were officers.

In addition, at least 67 combat pilots, including navigators and mechanics, have been killed, according to the BBC.

The BBC reported that it takes up to 17 years and costs $14 million to train a military pilot.

The BBC obtained its figures from publicly available information about Russian military deaths, including local media reports, but warned that incomplete disclosure means that Russia's real casualty figures — including those of elite troops — are likely to be significantly higher.

Russia's Defense Ministry last updated its casualty numbers at 1,351 in March.

Western defense officials estimate that upwards of 80,000 Russian soldiers have been killed and wounded since the start of the invasion.

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