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Russians Land in Alaska to Seek Asylum: U.S. Authorities

By AFP

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AP Photo/Becky Bohrer/TASS

Two Russians who landed in a remote part of rural Alaska are seeking asylum in the United States, politicians in the far northern state said Thursday.

The pair landed just weeks after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an unpopular mobilization of citizens in a bid to turn the tide on his faltering invasion of Ukraine.

"Two Russian nationals landed at a beach near Gambell, located on the northwest tip of St. Lawrence Island in Alaska, and requested asylum in the United States," said a joint statement from senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan.

The spot is just a few dozen miles from the tip of Russia's far east.

A spokesman for the U.S. Department for Homeland Security said the two Russians, whom it did not identify, arrived on a small boat.

Their cases are being reviewed "in accordance with applicable U.S. immigration laws," he said.

The arrival of two people from Russia makes it clear that "the Russian people don't want to fight Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine," said Sullivan.

Last month Putin ordered a partial mobilization to reinforce his troops in Ukraine, calling up around 300,000 reservists.

The shock announcement led to a rush on air tickets as men of military age scrambled to leave the country.

As discontent mounted in Russia, the Russian president acknowledged at the end of September that "mistakes need to be corrected," asking to "bring home those who were summoned without proper reason."

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