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Elite Russian Marine Unit Slams Military Leaders for 'Baffling' Battle Losses

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Russian military in Ukraine. **Russian Defense Ministry / TASS**

An elite Russian naval infantry unit has blasted its superiors' decision-making after suffering massive losses in what its members called a "baffling" assault on an eastern Ukrainian village, pro-war reporters said Sunday.

Russian forces launched an offensive on the Ukrainian garrison in Pavlivka southwest of Donetsk on Nov. 2 to seize control of a key supply route, the Ukrainian military and pro-Russian officials have said.

Four days later, the 155th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade blamed its military leaders for the loss of 300 men in a letter to the governor of their home region in the Far East.

"We were thrown into a baffling offensive," the letter was quoted as saying by pro-war blogger Anastasia Kashevarova and the Grey Zone Telegram channel.

State media war correspondent Alexander Sladkov disclosed the existence of the letter

without directly quoting it.

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The marines from the Primorye region city of Vladivostok accused their immediate commander and the head of Russia's Eastern Military District of forcing an advance on Pavlivka, despite their strategic disadvantage, "for the sake of their reports and awards."

"We lost about 300 men killed, wounded and missing in four days as a result of a 'carefully' planned offensive by the 'great commanders'," the letter said.

Military analyst Rob Lee, quoting Russian war correspondent Alexei Sukonkin, said Friday that 63 brigade members had been killed in two days — more Russian naval infantrymen killed than during the entire first Chechen war in the mid-1990s.

"The district command together with [the brigade commander] are hiding this... for fear of accountability," the letter circulated Sunday said. "They don't care about anything other than showing off. They call people meat [cannon fodder]."

Accusing their leaders of enjoying protection from Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, the letter's authors asked Primorye region Governor Oleg Kozhemyako to send an independent commission to inspect the feasibility of the Pavlivka campaign.

Kozhemyako on Monday ordered a probe of the complaint for possible "disinformation" from Ukrainian intelligence services.

Russia's Defense Ministry issued a statement later Monday denying the brigade's claims, saying its losses did not exceed 1% of those killed and 7% wounded.

It further claimed that Ukrainian forces suffered between seven to nine times the losses compared with the 115th brigade.

The ministry also maintained that the elite unit has been "effective" in seizing 5 kilometers of land in 10 days and will continue "until combat tasks are fully complete."

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