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Russian Soldier Faces 15 Years in Jail After Criticizing 'Poor' Training – Reports

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

A Russian soldier faces up to 15 years in prison after getting into an altercation with his superiors for criticizing poor training conditions and equipment shortages, media reported Tuesday.

The soldier identified as Private Alexander Leshkov was filmed shouting profanities and shoving an officer at a parade ground near the Russian military's mega-church outside Moscow.

Leshkov can be seen flanked by fellow soldiers who voice anger over ill-fitting body armor and insufficient firearms training before their deployment in Ukraine in two videos published by the Ostorozhno Novosti news channel on the Telegram messaging app Sunday.

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“You’re not obeying the commander-in-chief’s direct orders to supply and train mobilized soldiers,” Leshkov is heard saying in one of the videos, adding: “I speak for the group.”

He is later seen exhaling e-cigarette vapor in the face of the officer, who extends his arm toward Leshkov’s chest and is immediately punched in the torso.

“You shouldn’t have done that,” the officer, identified as Lt. Col. Denis Mazanov, responds.

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Leshkov was charged with two counts of insulting and using violence against a military commander, Ostorozhno Novosti reported Tuesday, citing his lawyer.

The charges carry a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

Russian lawmakers raised the penalty from the previous five years shortly before President Vladimir Putin announced a “partial” mobilization of 300,000 reservists in September. The new law cites mobilization as an aggravating circumstance.

Putin declared an end to the draft in late October, though experts have warned that military call-ups could resume without a presidential order.

It was not immediately clear when the filmed altercation occurred, but Ostorozhno Novosti suggested it was after the declared end of mobilization.

“The soldier’s actions — which were supported by other mobilized men who could refuse to carry out orders — were aimed at undermining the unit’s combat readiness,” investigators reportedly concluded.

A court ordered Leshkov to be held in pre-trial detention until Jan. 13, 2023, lawyer Anri Tsiskarishvili told the outlet.

Ostorozhno Novosti reported, citing unnamed sources, that Leshkov enlisted in the Russian army as a volunteer on Oct. 3.

Leshkov’s arrest follows numerous reports of mobilized Russian soldiers and their relatives expressing anger, staging riots and refusing to fight in Ukraine over conditions on and off the battlefield.

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