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Military Court Sentences Russian Soldier for Desertion in Ukraine

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Russian Defense Ministry

A member of the Russian Armed Forces was handed a one-year suspended sentence back in August for deserting his unit in Ukraine, a court in Pskov announced on Monday.

Professional soldier Mikhail Guryanov was found guilty by the court of abandoneding his unit on Apr. 6. He was subsequently apprehended and detained by the Russian military in Pskov on May 25.

Guryanov was reportedly deployed on Jan. 29, nearly a month before Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

Independent Russian media outlets identified Guryanov as belonging to the Pskov-based paratrooper unit that occupied the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, where Russian troops were subsequently accused of carrying out some of the worst atrocities in the war so far.

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While the maximum sentence for desertion is five years in prison, the judge handed Guryanov a lenient sentence in recognition of both his guilty plea and his military service in Ukraine.

Guryanov told the judge he abandoned his unit having "decided to take a break."

Shortly before President Vladimir Putin announced the "partial" mobilization of reserves in September, federal lawmakers passed legislation introducing jail terms of up to 10 years for desertion during mobilization or wartime.

Guryanov is at least the third Russian soldier known to have been sentenced for desertion in recent months.

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