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Russian Families Bury Troops Killed in Makiivka

By AFP

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Makiivka, Ukraine **Nikolai Trishin / TASS**

Russian families on Sunday buried servicemen killed in a Ukrainian New Year's strike on troops in the eastern town of Makiivka.

At least nine men were laid to rest in the central region of Samara on the Volga River on Saturday and Sunday, local authorities said.

Since President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on February 24 last year, Russian authorities have kept a tight lid on troop casualties and funerals for Russian men killed in Ukraine are usually low-key.

In an extremely rare admission, Russia's defense ministry said this week that using US-supplied artillery Ukraine had killed 89 troops in the Russian-controlled town of Makiivka in the eastern region of Donetsk.

Russian military correspondents say the death toll could be much higher and the targeted troops largely consisted of newly-mobilized soldiers.

Two men were buried in Tolyatti, home to Russia's largest carmaker AvtoVAZ, city authorities said Sunday in a statement on VKontakte, the country's largest social network. Both men are understood to have worked at AvtoVAZ.

The head of Tolyatii, Nikolai Rents, said the two men had gone to Ukraine "to defend the interests of the Fatherland, our future and the future of our children."

A senior representative of AvtoVAZ, Dmitry Mikhalenko, pledged to support the families of the two killed in Ukraine.

Another two men were buried in the town of Novokuibyshevsk, said local authorities, who hailed them as "true heroes."

"In a difficult time for their country, they acted like real patriots and real men," the head of Novokuibyshevsk, Sergei Markov, was quoted as saying.

Another five men were buried in smaller settlements of the Samara region on Saturday and Sunday, local officials said.

On Sunday, the defense ministry said Russian troops struck the eastern city of Kramatorsk to avenge the soldiers killed in Makiivka. They claimed to have killed more than 600 Ukrainian troops. There was yet no comment on the strike from Ukraine.

In September, Putin announced a partial mobilization to buttress Russian troops on the ground in Ukraine.

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