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Hundreds Turn Out to Mourn Ukrainian Saboteurs Killed in Russia

By AFP

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Mourners attending the memorial service in Kyiv on Tuesday. **Dimitar DILKOFF / AFP**

Hundreds of mourners packed a Kyiv church on Tuesday for the funeral of Ukrainian saboteurs killed on a mission in Russia, following a spate of attacks along Moscow's frontier.

Mourners, many in camouflage and covering their faces, attended a service in a central Kyiv church for four men — one still a teenager — who were killed in December during an incursion into Russia's southern Bryansk region.

Russia's FSB security service announced it had killed the men, saying they were armed with rifles and explosives. Russian media reported their bodies were handed over this month.

The men's coffins were draped with the banner of a nationalist battalion called Bratstvo (Brotherhood), created on the basis of a party of the same name.

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They were in "one of the reconnaissance sabotage groups of Bratstvo that take part in raids at the enemy's rear, both in the occupied territories... and on Russian soil," the leader of the Brotherhood party Dmytro Korchynsky told AFP outside the church.

"They were killed during one of those raids."

Korchynsky said the battalion when in Russia acts "at its own risk" and does not coordinate with Kyiv's armed forces.

Crowds then came to pay final respects to the men — 34-year-old Yuriy Gorovets, 32-year-old Maksym Mykhailov, 34-year-old Taras Karpiuk and 19-year-old Bogdan Lyagov — on Kyiv's central Independence Square.

Ukraine's armed forces officially do not fight against Moscow beyond the country's borders.

There have however been major incidents including an explosion in October on a bridge Russia built to annexed Crimea, which was well known to be a prestige project personally favored by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Last week Moscow claimed "Ukrainian nationalists" had crossed into the Bryansk region and killed two civilians, while Kyiv dismissed the allegation as a "deliberate provocation."

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